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To Lord Seagrave  
with the Author's respects  
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H E N R Y   A C T O N

A N D

O T H E R   T A L E S .

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## HENRY ACTON;

OR,

### THE GOLD SMUGGLERS.

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“ There, in its centre, a sepulchral lamp  
Burns the slow flame, eternal, but unseen;  
Which not the darkness of despair can damp,  
Though vain its ray as it had never been.”

BYRON.

“ Myself this enterprise to-night will share.”

BYRON.

ARE not the cabals, the local politics, of the humblest village as operative in exciting the passions, and in awakening the powers, of its secluded inhabitants, as those of the highest ones of a mighty state? Do we not behold as much striving for place, as much envying for advancement, as much ambition for distinction, amidst the rectors, doctors, attorneys, and corporate

bodies, of an obscure town of England, as amidst the dwellers of its court and capital? Human passions, bad and good, work in these less aristocratic scenes as busily as they do with those who give laws to nations, guide in holy council, or pilot the helm of state intrigue. Do not imagine that, with the inferior ranks of life, ignorance generates sympathy, or seclusion produces innocence: the causes of excitement may degenerate, but passion exists with equal strength, and operates with equal force, in both stations; and if man, like “an angry ape,” “plays such fantastic tricks as make the angels weep,” or, like Queen Mab, “with wiles so closely bound, performs such strange manœuvres as waking reality doubting asks,” if such things may be the living acts of mortals? we are not to deem that such acts are alone the performances of the high and lofty ones of the world.

The absolute nature of man’s mind is the same, be his station what it may. It may sometimes be deemed that, as the stream of existence

courses along, and borrows a peculiar shade from local objects, that the tint thus given to the mind has effectually changed its native hue ; remove the object, and mark well if the colouring remain. No ; the course of life will again discover its original shade, and in its onward current only borrow new tints from new objects ; and though, under such impressions, we may seem the creatures of circumstances, and that our very nature has yielded to their force, yet still, man in the aggregate remains the same, and is governed by the same passions. In prince and subject, high and low, are equally disclosed man's erring state. Malice, envy, ambition, love of aggrandizement, work not less actively amidst the crowds of metropolises and palaces, than I have found them busy in the humblest cottages, for " little things are great to little men." Whilst young, we do not mark these things ; the world hums gaily around us, and all looks happy,—at least it did so to me ; my youthful days were like a soft smiling current, that glistens beneath a sunny sky, and

knows no darker shade than a summer's cloud might throw. Joying in nature's loveliness, I tasted no sorrow : reposing on the bright green banks which hang over the glad waters of my native shores, I could doze hours away, existing in worlds of visionary illusion ; but many a weary mile, many a watchful hour, has been past over since that period of indolence was mine.

Association gives to all objects of memory their value ; and few lands have ever worn a dearer or lovelier charm than this my native one. Many waters have I been tost over, in storm and repose, but never have I given my sails with such buoyancy to the winds as I was wont to do in my days of boyhood. Every scene of that boyhood seems but of yesterday ; but as they now arise before me, with what different calculations do I look upon them ! not that I value them less, but that I rather prize them more. They bore a stamp and character peculiar to themselves.

A small fishing town, on the coast of Kent,



was my birth-place,—its humble inhabitants my only companions,—in which spot, for many years, almost wholly unmolested, they pursued a course of traffic that led them to despise all restraint, and bid defiance to all national law ; still was each private act and individual feeling directed by the strictest honour, guarded by the nicest principle, though existence seemed enslaved and enjoyment sacrificed to the love of aggrandizement. Yet when in possession of the hard-earned fruits of their toil, did they seem reckless of all the comforts of wealth, unaltered by its luxuries, and exalted above all its temptations.

In thus running back to these early scenes and associates, I rather do so from their being connected with other circumstances than as bearing an interest in themselves ; for though Jack Jobbings and Will Venture are prized by me in all their original character, yet are they, in these days of the grand march of intellect, but rough figures. Master Jack was none other than one of the agents employed by the French govern-

ment, during the late war, to carry on a traffic in the guinea trade, alias gold smuggling.\* The risk on the side of Master Jobbings was immense, but so was the reward; not that the danger lay exclusively in the dread of discovery

\* To few of my readers this mode of cheating his Majesty's revenue is perhaps known. At the period of this tale, revolutionary France was engaged in war with nearly the whole of Europe: to pay the numerous forces employed to carry out her ambitious views required a circulating medium of no small extent. To remedy the deficiency of gold and silver to some degree, everything that had the semblance of metal was, with talismanic touch, converted into coin. Churches were robbed of their plate, Madonnas of their embroidered robes and shrines, the loftiest towers of the "church-going bells." This plunder was then consigned to the melting-pot, which, after having passed through that fiery ordeal, was stamped with the arms of La Belle France, and, *per force*, passed current. All this sufficed for a time: it stopped the gap at home; but this base alloy would not circulate abroad. In her exigency, she looked to her old and determined enemy, England, for assistance; and as no man understands better how to profit by a neighbour's distress than John Bull, an illicit traffic in the exportation of gold was soon set on foot by means of agents on the opposite coasts; one of which honest body was my friend Jack.

on the part of our government, but so much was entrusted to other hands, that the chief risk lay in the honesty and rectitude of the agents employed by Master Jobbings and Company to accomplish their ends, at the head of whom stood my friend, Will Venture, whom we shall further see was truly worthy of the confidence reposed in him. But all these things looked very different to my observation then to what they do now; for the coarse manner of life of those who dwelt in the humble town of Folkestone appeared neither singular nor questionable to me at the early period I am speaking of. What did I think, then, of harm, when I was accustomed to see Jack fill his guinea-bags with hundreds and thousands? What did I think of his cheating his king or defrauding the government? Indeed, I doubt not, so common appeared the practice, and so well known amongst us, that I imbibed the idea that it was what all the world might do. Many a night have I seen Jack spread the table in his little parlour with

his golden stores, and say to Will, as they shook them into their canvass sacks, " Every honest man has a right to earn his bread, aye, Will ?" " Yes, to be sure, Master Jobbings, in defiance of king and taxes ; not that I don't love my king, as long as he wont take the bread out of a body's mouth, as one may say ; and after all, you know, we are all *above board*." " Yes, yes, Will ; as long as you keep the planks between you and the water, we are safe enough : and I always knew you for a wise man, and an honest one too, Will, for our man, Mr. R., says your word is as good as a yard of parchment, sealed and signed. But come, lads, is all right below ?" " Never fear ! Will Venture is your man, in the teeth of tide and wind, though he may have but a plank as thick as a shilling between him and Davy's locker. D—n the wind ! a man can die but once." After such interviews as these, away would trudge Will and his comrades with their guinea-bags, and I after them to the beach, and watch him stow into his little cockle-shell his

treasures, as fearlessly as he would now-a-days his fishing-tackle ; but then no *grand stone* pier obtruded on the long line of the shingly beach. A few huge stones heaped together was all the landing-place which the town of F—— could boast in those days : no white-trowsered, white-hatted revenue sharks sent their scowling looks into each tiny bark as it went sailing on the free ocean, or came dancing home after a straying voyage. Sometimes, indeed, a whisper would run through the town that an officer had been seen lurking about ; but the officer had his own reasons for giving breath to this whispering, for it was generally the forerunner, through some strange fatality, by which some of the shiners were conveyed into his own pocket, but he, poor man, knew not how the thing got there, but then others did, and so all parties rested in perfect ease on the subject.

To return to Will and his guinea-bags. A fearless dog he was,—as fearless a one as ever pulled an oar or hoisted sail between our town

of Folkestone and Boulogne, and that is saying much, for it was sometimes a trembling sight to see Will Venture put off amidst the surgy and angry surf in his wee bark, and then row might and main over the swelling waves; to see how the slender thing would dance, and toss, and dip upon the rolling swell: and when all was storm and fret would we distinguish the gleesome voice and whistle of Will, and watch his little boat, till on the moonlit waters, “like an arrow that cleaves the air, it shaved along the silver path, nor left a track behind.” Poor Will! I have often thought upon you and your midnight voyages, when I have been wandering in regions peopled by children of a strange speech, and where all was strange,—their gods, their very forms, beings of another link in the chain of creation. Though apparently so drawn off from all former associations, still has neither time nor change obliterated the remembrance of the last scene in which I beheld Will Venture. He had that common propensity of

our nature implanted in his heart, and few, I believe, exist without it—the *love of money-making*. Alas! like him, do we not see man, amidst the better advantages of this world, sacrificing peace, conscience, health, — nay, even soul and body, for the gain of this “one thing needful.” If it is the first wordly blessing of life, strange to say, it is not less its bane. That all seek it so earnestly, in the present constructed state of society, ought scarcely to excite our surprise. Money, like the charmed word of the fairy tale, opens all hearts, robes vice in virtue’s form,—transforms deformity into beauty, vulgarity into refinement,—converts the *enemy* into the *friend*. But what does poverty?—it bars all hearts, is a death-shroud of every perfection,—an accursed stamp, from which mankind flee as from a tainted reptile. That Will Venture, then, should seek, late and early, at all risk, to become rich, is no way to be wondered at. That which we must call education had every way tended to nourish this indigenous plant of the



human mind in him ; yet to him it was a severe school, for Will, like many others, saw his master grow rich by his exertions,—saw himself a machine, while others profited by his movements ; not that he was singular here either, or, that such a system was confined to the narrow limits of a smuggling gang and its striving agents. Not that I would speak lowly of my native town, for it was a grand corporative body, with mayor, jurats, and I know not what of power and privilege ; but yet, in the days of Will, mayor, jurat, and all, were equally the governors of as strong and trusty a band of smugglers as ever tuned together. But while they set the children to play, or rather the slaves to work, and fattened upon their labours, as rectors do on those of their curates, attorneys on their clerks, and all sinecures on their deputies, these slaves reaped little more than a sufficiency for existence ;—such is the *humbug* of life, high and low.

Master Jobbings and Co. realized a 30 per



cent. upon the golden guineas with which they trafficked; and while certain agents of the French government were paying them this, Will Venture was risking his life, exposing himself to the dangers of capture and imprisonment, to receive a ten pounds upon the landing of a cargo of three thousand guineas, the profits to Jobbings and Co. being no less than 900*l*. But notwithstanding all this, he appeared a happy fellow. I have Will now before me, just prepared for one of his trips. He was certainly no beauty, with a huge black head, not unlike a shaggy wolf dog's; then the sharp grey eye and bristly brow, the dense shade of beard, shewing through a complexion something deeper than that of tawny port. But still, with all this roughness, shade, and feature ill put together, I never looked at Will's countenance that I did not distinguish honesty, happy content, and open-hearted benevolence, combined with a degree of shrewdness which we do not often distinguish in the expression of the English. To look at Will in his

waterproof boat cloak, his blue trowsers of many plaits, you would have said, What a huge figure ! surely the weight of these muscular limbs will sink his little bark in one moment ! But no ; four *such* fellows gaily rowed her over the glad blue waters ; and she has often, like a thing of nought, been tempest-tost, nor moved a plank beneath her heavy burthen, and weathered that which brought death and destruction to many a larger sail. Though Will was no beauty, he had not wooed in vain, for he had wooed and won one of the prettiest maids of fair Kent ; and, as he was wont to say, “ No place like Kent for pretty lasses. As for your shires, I was never amongst them, and I do not want to be.” Though time had somewhat touched Mrs. Venture’s roses, they had only been transferred to two or three chubbyprattlers, and Susan Venture was even now giving full promise of one day shewing the belle of the town of Folkestone, —no very mean distinction, for in no land (and I have seen many) have I beheld so many bright

eyes, sunny cheeks, and lovely forms, as were disclosed amongst its maidens.

My friend Will I said loved money; yet that which many want who love money he certainly possessed. A heart ever open to the wants, the wishes of his fellow-men; risk of life was nothing to Will, if danger demanded succour—for who so active in the hour of need? He was a merry fellow too, for who so full of glee and fun? Will's waggeries were like a certain Irish judge's puns. No good joke was ever told amongst us, but it had its origin in him. He, too, like St. Paul, was "all things to all men," — "wise with the wise," cunning with the cunning; he met all men upon their own footing,—the German, the Frenchman, the Dutchman, or the Paddy; at home with all; and often were his powers called forth. Paddy was his delight; he could banter back his jokes, and tip him his brogue and his blarney to a turn; quaff his whiskey, till Pat would declare, by St. Patrick, he was no Englishman

at all, but a *rare* born native. With what pleasure of a night have I stolen down to Venture's snug little chimney corner, to listen to the marvels related by his stray visitors ! and a mug of good ale and a warm hearth was always there for any old friend.

While thus assembled one evening, tidings came from Master Jobbings that it was blowing right fair for Dunkirk. The wind was as yet only fresh, but the surges were beginning to look angry, and growling along the shingly beach, now and then to toss up a foaming breaker on the uncouth pier. The moon was up, and bright in light, as now and then a surly-looking cloud rolled away from her. When we opened the door to take a peep at the night, we found it gathering fast for a brisk squall ; the long chain of high white cliffs which extended away eastward were looking dark and frowning ; even the little row of houses which faced the beach were scarcely marked in distinction from the mass of those which rose behind them.

The town of Folkestone is strangely built, the houses standing like autumn leaves scattered by the wind, dropping and crowding up a high eminence, just thrown as if by accident, and, like the grouping at a lord mayor's assembly, good and bad huddled together, none holding deference to his neighbour; some with their sides turned where the front ought to have looked, some with their back to their neighbour's side, others with their hall-door peeping into their neighbour's yard; houses in plenty heaped together, but street there is none, for when hoping to find an egress at the termination of a few paces, you discover you have landed on another mansion. To-night, cliff and building seemed identified, and we again hastily entered, and fastened the double door of Will's dwelling, which stood immediately facing what might be called the harbour, for sundry crafts and vessels lay lolling at anchor there in a narrow creek, whose waters at high tides nearly washed the very walls of Will's dwelling; but we closed all

out of sight, save the bright and blazing hearth ; and soon the growling sea, the dash of the fresh waters and freshening wind, became lost in the loud voice of Will, or in the babel prattle of the chubby group of young Ventures. We were all again seated, children, wife, drop-per-in,—Will and myself on one side, snugly sheltered by the high-backed oaken screen ; Mrs. Venture was placed opposite, in all matronly dignity, in her easy chair ; while in the centre of the hollow cave-like fireplace was stationed the well-polished little round table ; and at our feet, on three-legged stools, were perched the hopeful race of Will and Susan Venture. Even at this distant period, when I revive the remembrance of this family group, how much of home and good feeling mingle with it ! The father's look of pride is before me, as he stroked the curly pate of rosy, blue-eyed Susan, and said, “ Ah, my little maid, you shall have a portion yet that shall buy a bachelor as rich as Master Jobbings himself, for d—n old dad, if there is a

brighter eye in all Kent—is there, mother?”

“Why should there be, father? but you forget old times and Susan Major; but that was for you to say, Master Venture.” How far dame Venture’s tale of vanity might have run, must still remain in doubt, for Will exclaimed, “I believe old Nick himself is belabouring our door! Who is there? Is it Boney himself, with invasion and cannonading? Beg pardon, beg pardon; what’s afloat now?” “Why, *you* must be afloat; so, off with that frothy mug, and tackle to,” replied Master Jack Jobbings, for it was no less a personage; nor was he one to be slighted, so all parties were astir in a moment. The brightest pewter was handed from off the shelf, where many a shining one did ample justice to Mrs. Venture’s thrifty housewifery; even the children were all now huddled into a corner, and Master Jack proved alone the centre of attraction: but no wonder, in a money-loving age, for Master Jobbings’ wealth was computed to be



something upwards of 100,000*l.*; though, as I now recal him in this scene, casting a cursory glance at his attire, gait, or manner, one would have guessed the owner was worth not above ten pounds, or perhaps something less ; but we must not judge of men's purses by their personal or mental advantages ; for gold can gild all vulgarisms of accent or delinquency of grammar ; and as for bulk, height, and breadth, Master Jobbings had sufficient for any station,—something about six feet, with shoulders broad enough to carry some scores of his money-bags on them. As for blood, his was high enough, for it was as high as it could be, being all lodged in the upper department, the hue of the face seeming a contention between black and crimson,—that is, of blood and bristle ; eyes of most industrious construction, at work on all sides, not being content with glancing in one direction, but each peering at the same time in opposite ones—no bad gift for Jack, as he was ever on the look-out to gain



more on one side than was a fair bargain on the other. Long years had Master Jobbings wasted in measuring and weighing twopenny-worths; but finding huxtering but a poor trade, and not a whit more honest than smuggling, though paying all proper dues to king and government, he determined no longer to have regard to such shackles, and turning his scales into guinea-bags, he became the great and rich Master Jack Jobbings.

The purport of this grand personage's visit to the humble Will's abode, at such a late hour, was soon made known. He seemed somewhat ruffled—puffed and floundered about the circumscribed apartment as might a leviathan in a horse-pond. "What is the matter now, Master?" inquired Will. "Why, that varlet, Leach, has been smelling a rat again. I thought, a week back only, I had poisoned the vagabond's scent with a good dose; but, zounds! Dick tells me the fellow is in full chace again." "I'll muzzle him, never fear. The bags are all sorted;

not one shiner shall the rascal get from out them to stop his jaw with. The varlet ! how dare he be snuffing for this month to come ! I'll teach him how to keep quiet."

"That's a brave fellow, Will ; and I'll be getting a fine husband yet for little Susan there, in the corner. Here's a health to you, dame Venture. Hush ! the pebbles do jingle a bit, too, under the surf ; curse those white-headed dogs."

"Never mind, Master Jobbings ; D. and Co. shall see the jinglers before the tide has dried her anger. But come, we must be off !"

Will put his head out of the door to reconnoitre a little. "Zounds, as the Irishman says, small blame to your civility, master Wind, but it blows a blast that would cut your foreteeth in twain."

"Close your foreteeth and your jaw too !" replied Jobbings. "Why, man, it's right fair for Dunkirk."

"Ah, so it is. Here, then, good luck be with you, dame and youngsters !"



Will lugged on his coat, slouched his hat, and away we trudged up to Master Jobbings'.

"I doubt whether Dick will be for bearing a hand over that surf to-night," remarked Will.

For a moment we stood and looked down upon the shore, which was laved by a long line of white and fretful foam, while all beyond was dense and shadowy. The dark and straggling clouds were in parts of the heavens rolling along in large masses, as if in preparation for a fierce combat, though the chastening moon, like a spirit of peace, rode on, fleecing the edge of the lowering threateners with her silver light, shedding a partial illumination from beneath them on the rising ocean, which was now beginning to reveal all the restlessness of a coming storm. All matters, however, were soon arranged for their departure. It was the last time I ever saw Will enter his little bark.

"Should the wind be after performing her promise," said Master Jobbings, (as they had given the final push to the boat,) "when you

get to the other side, you know Light Fly is not far off, and she will soon throw you a cable to haul you aboard."

"Well, well, we will see to that all in good season. Now, bear a hand, my boys," said Will.

In a few minutes we saw the light skiff shoot past the surgy foam; we caught the well-known whistle, in token that all was well; in one second more, a slanting moon-beam showed the little bark as a buoy on the broad and tossing waves, and then it became lost to our sight in the darkness of space.

"It blows tough, too," said Jack, as he gave his great-coat an additional button; and without further conversation we retired to our respective homes.

Little care then was mine. A light heart generally makes a sound sleeper; but *to-night* I could not sleep. The hurricane gust seemed as if driving the very ocean on our habitation; the windows rattled, and the house creaked again in the blast.

Will was not long absent from my thoughts, and in the morning, by times, I was glad to hasten down to learn tidings of him and his companions. The wind had lulled much with the returning tide, but things looked a little disordered after the sharp work of the night, as does a mansion of evening revelry on the following morning; but the sun soon was dancing on and brightening the fresh waves as they came tossing and curling along like "the hopes of early days." It was a clear September morning; the patches of green sward shewed gaily amidst the rugged aspect of our cliffs, and the mist was busily floating off the distant hills; many a white sail was sporting on the wavy waters; all on the beach shewed active life,—some occupied in repairing their nets, some looking to their fishing skiffs, while others were just launching off; though many stood there, I recognised not my friend Will amongst them with his gleesome fun.

I could perceive much mysterious conversation was going on amongst some of them—could ob-

serve a wondrous shake of the head, meaning unutterable intelligence ! I could discover, too, something of doubt and fear, an occasional pointing and use of glasses, as if an acute spying was taking place of some interesting object out at sea. Many sails were pursuing their way along the pathless deep, some, in my mind, perhaps to death, and others, perhaps, to peace and wealth. Yet such were not the thoughts which occupied Master Jobbins,—not such the speculations of the group which I now joined. No ! their eyes were fixed on one little speck ; but that little speck was full of mighty interest, for to the sapient observers it bore all just semblance to none other than one of their prized vessels, the “Fast Fly”—a very miracle of swiftness. “Will is aboard her, I dare be sworn, said one ; yes, yes.” Still Master Jobbins’ glass was fixed on the movements of Fast Fly, but with a manner that plainly evinced that it was not of Will Venture he was thinking. “I say, Mr. Holden,”—and a low conversation commenced,

of which I could only catch, "Yes, yes"—"That varlet"—"Clear for Dungeness"—"Leach"—"Bribe," and such broken words, so tantalizing to a curious listener. But, however, I plainly learnt that hints had been received that the Revenue had been on the brisk look out for Fast Fly off Dungeness, the very spot to which she seemed now shaping her course under all sail; but of the fate of Fast Fly I cared but indifferently, provided Venture was not aboard her; and finding that of him and his party all were equally uninformed as myself, I retired to breakfast with my uncle, who was ever ready to offer comfort in times of doubt: he was the rector of the parish, known to all as the good Mr. Acton. Perhaps in these days, when the *good* are so plenty and the *pure* so rare, Mr. Acton would have not done as the popular preacher of a fashionable watering-place; and it would have perhaps been said, Mr. Acton knew little of leading himself or guiding others in the right; yet were all his doctrines scriptural,



all his thoughts peace, all his actions charity—the friend of all; merciful to the erring, severe to none; humble in all his habits, yet hospitable to all who came, or needed the good man's fare. Week after week had seen him enter the church respected, and listened to by many an attentive and loving parishioner, many of whom, like himself, were now growing grey under the withering hand of time; and many, under his guidance, walking the same path, were securing, it is to be trusted, the same end. Now and then he would lecture with some harshness such as my friend Will; tell them "theirs was a vagabond life; that it would lead to no right finishing"—yet even here he hoped for better things. "The war would not last much longer,—that then Venture and his coadjutors would turn their time to worthier pursuits." Whether good Mr. Acton was as just in this inference as he was in general has yet to be told.

Day after day did I watch with Will's friends for his return—yet still no tidings! Rumours



were afloat that the Fast Fly had anchored for a couple of hours somewhere off Dungeness Point ; that Leach, with some of his companions, had been observed skulking about the Point much at the same time, but that neither Leach nor Fast Fly had been seen or heard of since. But, however, these were times when saying all which might be thought, or revealing all which might be known, was not exactly the mode of proceeding amongst the inhabitants of the neighbourhood of Folkestone ; and no people knew better how to keep their own council than they. But, gradually, ominous and portentous conjectures spread through our town. Vague hints of the extraordinary disappearance of Leach and two of his companions, for it was now known beyond doubt that they were nowhere to be found ; groups of wiseheads were constantly seen reasoning and expounding the mysteries of such undue proceedings ; half-breathed inuendoes of treason on the part of the navigators of Fast Fly ; dark hints respecting Will's honour. Will was

then the first man of Folkestone who had ever even had a doubt expressed respecting his honour! No, no, impossible! He had many friends—amongst the number was good Mr. Acton; they all said it would soon blow over; his honour was as bright as the brass buttons on his last new Sunday coat; it was only a cloud from the enemy's coast; it would vanish at his presence in a moment, off such fine-wrought metal as Will's honour,—aye, as fast as one's breath off the best polished steel!—such a thing must not be thought of: perhaps he had got entangled with some of the war-ships; or, more dreadful than all, might he not have perished in such a fearful night?—But their conjectures were like some high and lofty mountain, over which one veil of mist has no sooner rolled away than another comes pouring on. At last it was determined in mighty council, that a fresh cargo should be embarked, and all due inquiry instituted on the opposite shores. Knowing the infinite gratification this final decree would afford

my friend Mrs. Venture, I hastened to communicate it to her. Poor Venture's habitation looked solitary and deserted ; even old Growl, the watch-dog and children's playfellow, lay surly and snarling at the steps of the door, nor greeted me with his usual hospitality, but, just beating his tail on the stone, allowed me to step over him ; and no noisy play told of the young ones within—all was silence ! I felt an uncomfortable presentiment as I lifted the latch. I found Mrs. Venture, not, as usual, at her thrifty housewifery ; and as I entered, no one came forward to notice my approach, for poor Mrs. Venture was sitting moping in one corner of the fireplace, while her companion appeared to know no occupation but that of tears.

“ I think I have something to tell that will comfort you, Mrs. Venture.”

“ God bless you for it, then ; for never did Mary and I need it more.”

“ Why, *they* are sending off a fresh cargo to-night, and tidings must be here before sunrise to-morrow !”

“ Is that all ?” said the pretty Mary Knight, who I discovered was Mrs. Venture’s companion.

“ Well, now, dont take on so, Mary, for Dick will be back among us yet, as handsome and as merry as ever,” replied Mrs. Venture.

I saw how matters stood, for Mary blushed crimson.

“ No, never fear, pretty Mary” — for few prettier lasses might be found than Mary Knight ; not that she shewed the lily and rose of rustic beauty, — no veiled dame of Turkish harem could boast a fairer or softer cheek and brow than she ; nor Italian beauty, locks and eyes of darker or brighter hue—“ So, so, Mary, Dick keeps his secrets ; I shall rate him well when we meet.”

“ Ah ! when you *do* meet, Mr. Acton.”

“ But hush,” said Dame Venture, “ what are folks after now ?—la ! how they are bearing away,” and opening the door, we heard cries of “ They are coming ! they are coming !”

I looked at Mary Knight—she was nearly

fainting ; but in an instant more she rushed from the house, pale and breathless ; we followed. When we arrived at the beach it was crowded, and others came running and shouting along. Every employment, every occupation, had given place at the joyful intelligence that Fast Fly was in sight, and a motley crowd were now seen along the water's edge—for all, men, women, and children, had rushed out from their employments. Women, with cloak in hands, some even with their very culinary utensils or working apparatus with them ; the men with their fishing tackle or hatchets, without hats or jackets, old hoblers without their crutches, and children screaming for their parents or nurses, unable to keep pace with the moving crowd.

Fast Fly was to be seen far out at sea, but laying like a log on the cold and motionless waters : her sails were set, but not a breath flapped their canvass.

But, independent of all interest for Will and his companions, Fast Fly herself was no insigni-

ficant object of affection. She was nominally a *free-trader*; but all those who knew her well, knew her for something of more worth, and knew her, too, for one of the loveliest and swiftest vessels that ever trod the ocean. Never had she approached her native harbour under more peculiar circumstances. She was one who was to bring tidings of those for whom prayers and hopes had been hourly offered up. She was also freighted with stores of increasing wealth to her owners: and with all this she herself was safe! No long-absent traveller of distant lands could be more welcome. Huzzas of greeting echoed along the beach—flags of handkerchiefs and aprons waved for her nearing.

“She will not make her mooring to-night,” said one of the friendly prophets.

“Then if she does not she will have a rough berth of it; for I can tell you, that though the sea is now as smooth-jawed as Leach himself, she’s gathering a fine squall into her whistle,—see yonder red ones of the west!”

“ Will’s in her,” said another ; “ there’s his very tack in that shift ! See how the sheet swells !—she will run into Sandgate, full swell, ere another half hour.”

“ Hurra !—hurra for Will !” vociferated the scudding multitude. Away scampered the motley group, as fast as young legs and strong chests would allow them, up the hill, and away over the cliff;—Mary Knight outstripped the stoutest of us. With eye fixed on the vessel, she seemed as if she could, with loadstone influence, draw it at once to anchorage,—while old ones wagged on, and blew and puffed, in full proof that man’s breath is but mortal !

It was not very long before a shout and loud huzza gave note to the laggards behind that all was well. Never did election hubbub pour forth more joyful acclamations than the welcome to Will Venture and Richard Major, as they leaped from the little boat of the Fast Fly on the beach of Sandgate. But where, now, was Mary Knight ? No longer foremost of the throng, but

in the very centre of the many, hiding the smiles and tears which, like April showers, alternately evinced the joy and fear of her innocent heart. One sly look of Richard's dark eye had told her that the merry glance of French lasses had been shot in vain, and that his affectionate heart was still all her own.

Our town of Folkestone was not, in those days of freedom, as now, frequented by the idle shopkeepers of London and their wives, or the half-pay list ; the one come to wash off the filth of the city, and the other to recruit a ruined constitution and pocket in our little town. No ; we had not become, in those days of primitive simplicity, that modern receptacle of nuisances—"a watering place not far distant from the metropolis." One long sort of house, which looked something resembling one of Will's old skiffs turned topsy-turvy, was all of bathing-machine we could boast. Here the Venuses of our town attired themselves, and, with a Diana bound, tost into the briny waves. Many a mischievous



source of frolic to us lads was it to watch these fair Naiads of the deep, as they gambled amongst its dancing waters of a summer's sunny morning ; but those days of innocence and simplicity are no more ; the march of intellect has made her a path even into our town. Yet I question if vice is one jot the cooler, or virtue one jot the warmer. Yes, I am sorry to say, the vanity of life is growing fast into manhood in my native and once primitive home ; for, since my return, I perceive now, forsooth, they must have their horse-machines, and bathing men and bathing women, all which must be supported and dearly paid for. Now, little pigeon-hole lodging-houses are stuffed with squalling, diseased brats, and half-gentry, flaunting in umbrella hats and in flounced-bottomed robes, popping in upon your seclusion at every corner, staring and gaping, wondering and conjecturing who and what you can be, with all the microscopic minutia of a country town's curiosity—

that dreadful disease and typhus of the idle. Then perched here, and now perched there, in the full blossom of modern education, is my butcher's daughter of Tooley-street, or my grocer's wife of Highgate, sketching, or rather butchering, our beautiful coast of Kent. Dear, dear me, let me go back and live with poor Will and Dick ! So I will again to old times and our motley group, as we hied back from Sandgate, buzzing and questioning Will and Dick as to the wonders of their travels, for we soon learnt they had sailed many a knot, and tost o'er many a wave, since we had parted. But where is great Master Jobbings all this time ? Alas ! little did any of us ever dream of seeing so moneyed a man brought so low ! Our cliffs were not composed of the firmest of creation's compositions. Master Jobbings, I said, was somewhat of a cumbersome bulk, and not given to much speed in his movements ; but now a sort of unusual emulation quickened his heavy paces, but finding the

party had far outstripped him, he betook himself to the " Lower road," as Master Jobbings was not the strongest in wind ; but all would not do, for he could not be quite so nimble, even with the best exertions, in keeping pace with the others, as he had been in converting hundreds into thousands ; and he had only partly proceeded on his journey, when he perceived the objects of that journey bearing fast homewards. Impatiently anxious to learn the fate of certain little moneys, he determined to conquer all difficulties, and mount to meet them up the high paths of the cliffs, and in a woeful plight did he find himself when he had ascended midway ; each foot, as he placed it, notwithstanding rough-shoeing, slipped from under poor Master Jobbings ; and though few had been his false steps in life, now one fatally taken was near costing a severe price. Vain were all his efforts to obtain firm hold again ; down slid the poor man, scrambling, holding, floundering, and kicking, catching at each tangible object within

reach, whether strata or clammy mud, crumbling sand, bare rock, or prickly brier, still no substantial footing could be gained. Coat was rent, breeches, gaiters,—all equally suffered in the warfare; and whither was he to be borne?—to nothing less delightful than a downy quagmire. He now rose lustily on a pair of substantial understandings; but the last was the saddest plight of all, for he kept vanishing,—sank far beyond his knees deep in mud. With clothes all tattered and torn, and pate uncovered, stood the great Master Jobbings, revealed to the merry group above, who were fast advancing, in jocund, merry mirth. Suddenly they halted, and roars of laughter proclaimed that his woeful case was known.

“Pull ahoy, Master Jobbings,” vociferated Will. “Is Varlet come home from his long sail, and vengeanced my sins upon your back, or rather body?”

But all the answer they received was a waive from the poor sufferer to come to his assistance.

Will, as ever, was the first to volunteer. Will hastened to descend, and of course we all followed Will; and many the stumble and many the laugh it afforded: but having rescued the honest trader from the quagmire, and fairly arrived at our destination, we separated, on the condition that we were all to meet at the club-room at five o'clock.

In what a narrow compass is the cause of years of future happiness or misery often centred! One event, with master stroke, gives to the future picture of life a character and a decision which, in blindness or in ignorance, human foresight could never have conceived. Oderic tells us of trees whose ripened fruit transform into birds, and then take flight from their parent stock. So do the promises formed for our own plans of life: just when the fairy flowers of fancy are budded into perfection, behold, they have taken wings unto themselves, and passed away from our possession.

But let us take a peep at Will and his party,

seated round a blazing hearth in the club-room of "The Lugger." A motley group was there. I have ever remarked, that in the lower or middling classes the character is more visibly delineated on the countenance than in the higher and more educated grades of life, originating, perhaps, from the stronger restraints of civilized society and acquired habits of thinking. The members now assembled knew little of the one or the other; natural good feeling stood in the place of the first, while instinctive acuteness answered the purposes of the latter. In the centre of the group, in a huge carved oak chair, presided the sapient and mighty Master Jobbings, quite puffed up and puffed out to his full dimensions in body and mind. Though repaired from his late mis-haps, still something of a patch was visible on the right temple; but there was a darkness appertaining to the whole character of Master Jobbings' phiz, so that shades were not much marked on its clarety disk. Next Master Jobbings sat a little, neat-built, dapper body, com-

pact, and tidy, and shrewd, with a certain screwed-up exactness, giving strong contrast to Master Jobbings' careless roughness ; something of a Welshy smallness and cunning of eye—a stamp of the profession to which he belonged ; for Mr. Tape was none other than the attorney of our town : but woe to their trade, or rather, woe to their pocket, had not Master Jobbings and Company received his services. So Mr. Tape, instead of, like all men of his profession, putting his fingers into his neighbour's pies till they leave them nothing but an empty dish, discovered, that in our peaceful community, he must cook a pie of his own or he would have none at all ; and so he did, and was, in my mind, an honestest man than most of his calling. If he cheated, he cheated those who could afford to pay : not so with others of the same class ; many an honest poor man do they rob to fill the purse of a cheating knave—none other than their own. But no rule without an exception ; and none are known to pass the grave-stone of poor little Tape with



“ Ah ! there lies the rogue that ruined me and mine.” No ; peace rest with the tidy man’s bones, as they now repose just close by the wicker gate which opens into the green fields that overhang our bright and smiling shores, where, on one of the tall white stones, that look, in the clear moonshiny nights, like spectres in their winding-sheets, is recorded the fame of Mr. Tape, with his race,\* living and dead. But, as I said, peace rest with the tidy man’s bones ! for even you, Dr. Gill, with that wise, dapper, powdered head, could not keep the man of law amongst us : but then, practice, not theory, makes the doctor ; and, however learned in the latter, poor Dr. Gill had little advantage of the former, for sea breezes, mountain air, and happy tempers, gave the doctor but small disturbance to his nightly dreams, and barely daily occupation for his bodily welfare ; but still the doctor managed to look ruddy and in good condition, and it was

\* The general mode of marking tomb-stones in Kent.



said that many a gilded pill even the doctor himself swallowed. Certain it was, he and Master Jobbings were mighty good friends ; not that the doctor or any other were valued one jot the more for gold or for antiquity with us ; and much I doubt if one held a higher station in any man's mind than the other, save the good Mr. Acton ; to him they looked as to a being of a superior class ; but his was that indestructible superiority of mind ; he borrowed no weight from wealth, for a few hundreds were all his possessions ; he held no distinction from ancestors, for he was the seventh son of a poor country parson. As for titled distinction, or heraldic honours, they may have heard of such things, but most probably they would have gone out to look at a Lord as we should go to stare at a set of Indian jugglers, or a show of untamed beasts. At Folkestone, poor and rich, high and humble, had been linking together, until it was a somewhat abstruse study to begin or end a genealogical tree. It was only sometimes the wonder how dis-

tinctions in relationship could be sufficiently struck out to shew if some might become husband and wife, for all the branches had kept twining in and around till it appeared impossible to point out the parent stock.

But the party assembled at the Lugger impatiently awaited Will Venture's narrative. The last comer-in had made his appearance, and a sort of fidgetty pause announced that all was ready.

"Here's to your health and shiners, Master Jobbings," said Will, as he quaffed a long draught from a smoking beaker.

The pipe was in Master Jobbings' mouth, so a mighty nod gave his thanks.

"A better night to us next week. It was but tough work, and black as Snug's Hole up the high cliff yonder, when we hauled ashore on those shallow sands of ——. Then the '*attendez arretez*,' of your French Leaches—for they have their plaguy varlets there, as foxy as any one of our own friends; but I soon taught them English is not French; that we were not

going to have any of their ratings—‘no mounsi-ers, no rat’s game about us, but the good coin—the monnoies, the monnoies; Louis d’or, Louis d’or!’ and we soon found that was *the door* for us. ‘Master Boné will ouvrey la porte n’est pas Mounsi-ers.’ The rogues! they turned their heads one way and their hands the other.”

A jolly laugh gave Master Will further encouragement; so on he proceeded.

“We soon managed to haul ashore, and away up to our friend of —, where we got something to wet our whistles and dry our skins. Jollily we smoked our pipes, and went to bed; up, and down to Master Isaac the next morning betimes. The old miser! he is getting as tough as his own beard. Old sinner! with as many lies as guineas. The rogue of a coquette!— ‘We want none of de gold monish; the marche full of de gold monish.’ The cunning hog-hater! Here’s to your health again, Master Jobbings; and old Isaac’s lies prove success to your trade.”

“Your health, good Will Venture.”

“So, Master Isaac thought to play his hoax upon us, with his ‘de grande armee.’ ‘In the Italie, dey want the silver monish; you get de bad price for de gold monish.’ Well, be it so; we’ll be back, and wait till the grand armee is beat in de Italie; so, bon jour, Monsieur Isaac. But Isaac still kept his little black eye upon us. ‘No, dat wont do, neider;—no beating the grand General; he de great man—de great Goliath.’ Come, Master Isaac, I did not rough it over tide and surf to waste my breath with you; come, tackle to at once,—I have a fine haul. ‘No, no; you too hard,’ said Isaac. Well, good day, master. ‘Wait, let me see what is good for de marche to give.’ No, say I; what is fit for de marche to receive. Down with my price, or none. The oars are in again; if I strike, you may melt your bells and coin your pewter as you like, for de grande armee in de Italie. ‘But you are so difficult in de bargains,’ repeated the craving old Hebrew. Oui, oui,

Isaac. But the bargains with us are somewhat harder in their metal than your dross on this side. Down with your bills at Master Jobbings' price, or here goes in earnest Will Venture. 'De monish, de monish,'—and his hand signed the bills. Now we had got shut of de monish, the question was, what were we to do with ourselves? for wind and waves were fighting as hard as Master Isaac will fight to leave his 'monish,' when he is about to embark for the other world. However, we had a sight of Fast Fly at her moorings off Dunkirk, and thought the best plan was to make a strong tug to get under her, but it was a blistering pull of it!—ten strokes more, and we should have been breakfast for the fishes!—but we got alongside of her, and they soon hauled us aboard. But all was not smooth water. No sooner set sail, and swelling along before the wind, than one of your firing cannonaders gave smoking chase after us. Odds! but I thought we were to have burly work of it: we began to whistle for her planks. It was a farthing rush-

light (was it not, Dick ?) between life and death ! —but all hands ahoy, give her all her play, and what was she but a chicken's feather. Away she danced and bounded, and off like my Bill's kite, and left heavy ones and combustibles for another weathering ; but it was not before we neared Dungeness Point——”

“ Ah ! then it was you we saw,” said Master Jobbings,—“ but what made you get away from your moorings in such quick time ?”

“ Well may you ask, Master ; but a plaguy squally mooring it would have been if we had not,”—and Dick and Will gave a hearty laugh. “ Why, odds, we should have anchored in the very jaws of Leach and his varlets !—No, we knew better than to fly in the teeth of such a wind as that—the hungry sharks——”

“ What, Leach !” exclaimed a dozen voices.

“ Ay, Leach himself !—and I dare swear, while I was stowing the cargo, you thought I was no true one,—what ! like one of your Deal ones ?—No ! I am none of that sort, and that

Leach has right to know—odds! it was rare sport. What right had the fellow to be poking his nose in other men's holds?"

"No harm done the fellow, I hope," said many voices.

"Harm!—what harm could be done to such a fresh-water lubber as that?—only shewed him a little blue water. But the winds are chattering a bit out of doors, too," said Will, pausing in his story. "The storm is laying to as hard as when we popped Leach and his man—not overboard"—

"Will, Will, what have you done?" said many breathlessly, and half rising.

"Belay that, my lads, and do not be putting out so much sail. Odds, how the thunder is roaring! But you ask me what I have done,—why, what I would do again; and no honest man ever harmed another that was not sorry for it;—what did I do with the varlets!—why, I stowed them among the timbers and away off to Cornwall!"—A pause for a few moments was caused; for the lightning, despite the blazing fire and candles,



illuminated the apartment, while the hail pelted and spattered on the windows, and crackling thunder only ceased, to be filled up by shaking gusts of roaring wind. “My eyes! it blows a few!”—and the group drew their circle into a narrower compass, whilst Will was evidently somewhat cooled in his narrative. “Let me see,—ah! I see Leach was the first to salute us on our arrival at the Point, and I knew he had been looking out for a squall for some time. What was to be done?—nothing but a cool hand could save us! All on board were for making a sink of it, and taking to our heels on terra firma. ‘Never shew the enemy your back,’ said I; ‘Will can weather it, leave it to him! Set every inch of canvass, and be ready for the first breeze!’ They stared a few, but still they trusted to Will Venture. So I jumped on land, told Leach and Squib I was willing, if they would give me my own price, that the cargo should be theirs, and many more secrets. Odds, how they gaped!—What, Venture, *you*!—but the rascals were too



mannerly to say what they thought, but I gulled them. Our bargain was signed and sealed, and they in Fast Fly in a jiffy. Dick, do you remember how you looked and swore when I helped Master Leach with my own hands on board, and said, now she is yours, gentlemen, and gave them a wink to come see what treasures they had to seize in the hold. The freshones, down they step ;—there, there ! I will light it again—as I slyly blew out the candle I was holding for them. Up I got, fairly on my legs, down with the hatch, barred, bolted, in a twiff, and Squib and Leach snug along with the brandy kegs !—”

“ What ! Squib and Leach ! ”—and roars of laughter followed the intelligence.

“ Let us all have a cup to their health,” said Master Jobbings, and all filled manfully.

In the pause, a sound rang, though rather indistinct, as the thunder now gave small intermission.

“ It is a gun !—”

“Pho, nonsense,” replied some ; “go on, Will.”

“So I said, I fairly capsized them into the hold—”

“But hark ! again—”

“Never mind, it is the wind—Will capsized them”—and again the merry ones laughed — “and what then ?”

“We put out before the wind right for Lands-End ; and for five hours left Master Squib and Leach to keep company with the rats. Odds, how the fellows bellowed ! After which we hauled them upon deck, and stuffed their jaws with salt beef and dry biscuits, and for every oath gave a joke and a laugh. I made for Penzance direct, as I had a sister there. Our voyage was a pleasant concern enough ; and before I landed the chaps, I got a pretty tight promise that if they found their journey back, they would be very grateful to me for the harmless frolic, when I might have done them such odds, considering how much I had them in

tow. So we spent a merry night at my sister's; and the next morning, Will, Fast Fly, and all, were many a league on their homeward course."

"Here's a thousand healths to the brave, honest Will Venture!" said Master Jobbings. "Hurra for Will Venture!" again and again vociferated the gleesome party,—when the door suddenly opened, and Mr. Acton, dripping, shivering, and pale, burst into the room, with a crowd of drenched followers! All jumped up as if electrified, and then stood mute and staring like persons roused from a sound nap.

"Look, look not at me!" said Mr. Acton, "but every soul lend his aid. To the beach, without a moment's delay; a wretched vessel is firing for relief; she is close on land, and every soul must perish without immediate assistance."

In an instant all was tumult;—without a word—without a consideration of floods from heaven, the lightning, thunder, and storm,—we all rushed after Mr. Acton. The way to the

beach was crowded ; all impelled by the one hope, the one endeavour, if in human power, to save the perishing crew. What a contrast !—terror had taken possession of every heart, which, a moment since, was jocund as home-bound seaman or holiday schoolboy ; every countenance was pallid with fear, which, a moment since, was convulsed with laughter. In all my scenes of life, never had I witnessed such a momentary, such a startling change, — nor amidst the elements of heaven witnessed such an unmitigated storm ! The roofs of the houses were shattered and given as paper to the winds ; the glasses whirled and crackled about our path and over our heads like dust from a sieve ; in fragments and atoms they fell around us ! All was roar, and glare, and sound. It seemed one moment as if the winds would carry us into the air ; the next, as if the lightnings of heaven would blast, the thunder crush, or the floods overwhelm us ! It was an awful moment !—a moment, it seemed, almost of annihilation ! Yet,

amidst it, one object engrossed all our thoughts, all our feelings: it was a dark speck on the boiling waves, scarcely distinguishable but by one faint star of light sometimes visible from its mainmast. It seemed to say, the light of life is here, but the darkness of the grave is around; sometimes, indeed, we obtained a more accurate view of the vessel, as the broad flash played above her and around her; then could see her dipping into gulfs of unfathomed depths, to rise again on mountains of foam; each flash revealed fresh havoc,—sails rent, ropes unbelayed, her spars shivered,—all hastening fast to inevitable wreck! What was to be done? Human aid seemed impossible! No boat could live in such a sea! The ocean, as we now stood on the beach, seemed raised high above its natural level!—we trembled when we looked on it, and turned to ourselves, as wave after wave came gulping over each receding one. Earth itself seemed, to the imagination, too circumscribed in compass for such a liquid force; but still we stood, though

the hail beat and pelted about us like musketry ; the footpaths swept away in streams of dissolving particles, while the winds sounded in our ears like the dying moans of a hundred lions ; the thunders pealed, and rocks echoed, as if a legion of devils were waging war amidst the angry clouds, and battling in fury with the hurricane tempest. No moment of peace,—the mind and senses were stunned !—But — but what was sound to all that glared before our dizzy eyeballs?—The heavens, at periods, resembled sheets of livid fire ; yawning chasms seemed opened above to disclose the very source and essence of light. Again might we trace the frightful lines play through the obscured heavens, as if the fabled serpents of living flame were there ; and then for a brief instant we could catch the clear, pure moon, passing along as an angel of glory amidst a world of desolation, — serene, though paled by the flashing lightnings which seemed to burst forth to shew every living and moving object in horror and woe ; then draw

back again to throw all into gloom deep as the grave ! But where was that wretched thing ? Did she still live amidst these contending elements ?—Yes ! our eyes were still fixed on her ; but what could *we* do ?—we stood motionless, powerless, with hands closed and raised in prayer, in speechless helplessness. We gazed and watched her every movement :—now she drives before the wind—now rocks from side to side ; every lashing wave toppling on and over her, as if they would splinter her timbers into a thousand atoms ; now she plunges nearly from sight into the reeking waters ; now she seems as if tossing above them, and rides high on the foaming breakers, again to sink—to rock and whirl upon destruction !—but now she approaches, and clearly we distinguish the groans, the screams, of the hapless, helpless crew ; now the lightning shews them, with outstretched arms, imploring aid from Heaven and man !—some on bended knee, some lying in death-like torpor, others rushing with wild de-



spair from one spot to the other, calling on all that is dear to look but again on them ! A figure we see amidst the rest, she holds her infant with maniac wildness, and only asks to save her child !—but where was aid ? The faintest glimmer of hope is at once crushed by Almighty power !—a streaming line of forked fluid shoots from heaven !—it strikes the mainmast !—it shivers into a thousand pieces, and falls, in blazing particles, amidst the smoking waters !—All is dark again,—the thunder rattles past,—one loud, long shriek arises in agony, so shrill, so piercing, man's heart's-blood curdles in his veins ; suffocation is in his breath as he takes the sound in all its bitterness. Mr. Acton fell on his knees ; we all followed his example. Never rose devotion with more fervour ; it seemed as if, like incense, it had risen to heaven :—the clouds opened, and the moon shone in full unbroken light,—the dark speck of the wreck was beneath it, nearly in close upon land, but apparently perfectly torn to pieces ; canvass, rigging,



masts, rudder, were all gone; not a stick left; wholly dismantled, she seemed a thing of death, and, drifting with the tide, every moment threatened utter destruction to all her crew. Were there no means to save? A hundred schemes were proposed; and while suggesting them, we beheld the surges lash over her deck, and sweep nearly all from their earthly suffering. The sight was maddening, for the storm apparently was fast subsiding.

“We must, we shall, save yet those that are left,” said the cheering voice of Will Venture. “The next swell will break her up;—now is our moment. Will any one man the life-boat with me? Come, get the cords; we shall do it, with Heaven’s help. Come, Dick Major.”

Prayers, supplications of “No, no; death is certain if you venture.—”

“Then we deserve to perish if we hesitate. Now, now is the moment; an instant will launch us beyond the breakers, and then we can throw the ropes.”

“You will perish all—all!” Above each could

I distinguish the voice of Mary Knight—"Go not, go not, Richard; you fly in Heaven's face. Look—look at the breakers!"

"God is with us; come, come. Pray—pray for us, Mr. Acton. Come, Dick!" again called out the well-known voice of Venture.

They enter the boat. What a moment of agony! Mary Knight was beside me; she covered her face a moment—rushed to the very point of the rough pier; there she stood. We all followed; all stood mute, pale, parched. Never, never shall I forget the rush and tide of those brief moments. Now our hearts beat again; the sounds are heard—"The surf is past!" "They near!" Then again, to see the boat dip into the meeting waves! Now every voice is agonized with "They are swamped!—They are gone!—Save! save!" Again, all is joy. "See! see! they rise!" Then, their call of, "The ropes! the ropes!—Bear a hand! Steady! steady!—Hold, hold back!" Then it was we strained ears and sight. "All, all is well!" "Quick, quick, off!" roared the voice

of Will. What was our expectation ! Tears filled every eye ; every breath was held. But that moment there came a cry—such a cry ! It ceased ; our eyeballs stretched to that returning ark ; but the waters shewed it not to our agonized gaze.

The boat had been swamped. All had perished, never to mingle again with God's living world. We stood, cold, powerless, looking on the one fixed point. What was there ? Death—death ; all was death, chill as the waters which closed over those loved and dear ones. The winds seemed hushed to our ears, the lightnings darkened to our sight ; but even from this torpor of bitterness something yet was to rouse us. It was the voice of Mary Knight. “ I'll save !—I'll save ! ” and with one bound she plunged into the rushing waters. We looked upon her struggles, and on the struggles of many amidst those battling waves ; but we could not save !

Where was the wreck ? With a sudden gust

she was heeled on the beach—on the dry, pebbly beach. But was it not too late, for was there any living within? Yes, one lived to tell her tale of suffering. It was her we had marked above all others—the fond, beseeching mother; her babe was still in her grasp, both secured to some of the woodwork of the deck. We first endeavoured to loosen the child from her arms. It was then we were certain life was not quite extinct, for even in death she struggled, and “My child! my child!” was weakly breathed forth. We lifted them from the vessel, and had them borne to Mr. Acton’s. A few moments more saw that spot which had witnessed such sad sufferings, deserted, solitary, and desolate, with nought to tell the melancholy story but the remains of the wreck.

Almighty power never awakens more vivid consciousness in the human mind than when that power speaks in tempest and in storms, for in feeling our own weakness, we turn to some superior strength. Man becomes a being of sub-

dued energies ; no voice of self-pride can whisper then of courage, save the courage of a pious and resigned mind ; bodily energies have no challenge to offer against such warfare—worldly distinctions no shield for such an hour as this. It humbles alike the prince and the beggar ; they tremble alike in acknowledgment that both equally are the subjects of some creating, self-acting influence, whose commands they cannot stay, and whose rule they cannot subvert. In such moments, how must guilt shudder !—how must infidelity doubt and tremble ! What are they ? As sand, that would stay an angry torrent's force—a twig, that would defy a mountain gust that roots it from existence. At such periods, too, the appalling workings are so hidden from man's finite comprehension that he rises more awfully than ever a mystery to himself. It is now asked, Whence art thou ? and whither goest thou ? Judgment rises up ; reveals the world in all its sinfulness and all its limitation. Its final close, with the deep tinting of a Mar-

tin's colouring, stands glaring upon the startled imagination. All the terror of extermination—the extermination of all this fair and earthly globe—rises up before him, when the expanse of sky shall be rolled away; the clouds of air dissolved; the rocks rent; the mountains consumed, crumbled into dust; ocean loosened from her bounds; the sun robbed of his light; the moon and stars falling from their orbits, disclosing their hidden generations; sepulchres of the dead unclosing their repositories; man, amidst all, standing alone imperishable!

But I wander. To return to the mansion of Mr. Acton, where we shall find the lady and her child receiving all that kindness and benevolence can administer to suffering. The lady's recovery for some time appeared doubtful, as not only her bodily but mental powers had received a shock and trial of no ordinary nature. Our good friend the doctor seemed to apprehend that there was little or no hope; but my kind aunt, Jane Acton, though not wishing to dis-

pute the doctor's skill, differed somewhat with him respecting the mode of treatment. The doctor was for allowing his patient to remain in a state of torpor; my aunt was for rousing her by gentle means. The doctor shook his head; but Miss (or Mrs. Acton, as she was usually denominated,) attempted little argument with the sapient son of Esculapius, but quietly pursued her own course, and finally succeeded.

At last, the lady spoke coherently, and seemed restlessly to seek around the room with her eyes for some object which, apparently, she was fearful to name. Jane Acton thought it would be dangerous to bring her child immediately to her, as evidently, from her not naming it, she doubted much its existence.

“ You wish for something,” said the soft, melancholy voice of my aunt. “ Is it your sweet baby ?—”

The mother spoke not; but her looks told the quick feelings the bare mention of its name had occasioned; animation seemed awakened. My



aunt paused a moment, and allowed the mother to see from her countenance that all was not as bad as she had imagined.

“ Your treasure is quite safe ; could you bear to see it ? ”

“ Yes ! yes ! ”

It was brought to her ; and the tears of so much unexpected joy did more than all my poor friend, the doctor’s, recipes ; and, with the babe folded in her arms, the poor exhausted mother found all the relief she required in an unbroken slumber.

It was now my aunt stole from her apartment to give us the happy intelligence that all was likely to do well.

“ Such a little cherub as the child ! ” said my kind aunt. “ It is about two or three years old ; —just that golden hair you love, Henry ; —it looked so dearly up in my face, and smiled—I fancied it almost an angel. It spoke, but I did not understand it ; it was some strange tongue it spoke in.”



“ Jane !”

“ Yes, my good brother.”

“ Nothing,” answered my uncle, though evidently wishing to say something; but silence was again restored for some time,—and what a still silence, thought I, after all that has past ! The sea was only just heard, as if tired, and tossing in exhausted strength on the shore; the winds breathing as if in drowsy sighs. In the room was only heard the ticking of the house clock. My aunt and uncle sat on either side of the fireplace in their old-fashioned, high-backed, carved chairs;—eyes closed, but evidently not in sleep, for I could perceive strong changes and workings in my uncle’s countenance as I sat watching him. Though time and sorrow had done much in erasing the flush and beauty of younger days, still now, as I looked upon both their pale faces, I thought of each, what a model for a Grecian or Roman bust ! My aunt’s Madonna face, shewing the tintless hue of a Guido’s pencil; the expression

was one of melancholy subdued into resignation,—of calmness, but not natural pensiveness; a darkness of overshadowing sorrow, the result of an acquired tone, rather than an original characteristic. My uncle reminded me of a Carlo Dolce: a saint-like brow, serene and unfurrowed, yet full of thought—benevolence its prevailing stamp. Not less of melancholy about my uncle than my good aunt, but it was not of that immoveable, cold cast, for she looked a thing of marble. She always struck me as resembling a beautiful stream that had once glistened to catch every bright reflection, but was now frozen in inanimation. But at all times my uncle seemed as if the world, with all its trials, could not sear his heart from sympathy with its sufferings,—above it, yet, from sweetness of disposition, he could not close himself from the hope that he could benefit it, though to him it was a thing of nought.

I sat watching and speculating on them till sleep stole over me; but it was not a sound one,

for I awoke the moment I heard my uncle's voice as he repeated, "Jane!" There was an unusual deepness in his tone as he continued: "Did you never hear a voice which resembled that of the invalid? Did you recal nothing in her looks?"

"Not exactly. Whom, brother, think you of?"

"Whom, sister Jane? But it is no matter."

My aunt paused, looked in my uncle's face, and at once caught his thought.

"Improbable! impossible! good brother."

"I tell you, Jane, I could not be deceived. Go, go, and you will be assured. I heard it but this moment;" for the invalid's door had been opened, and we could distinctly catch the sound of her voice as she spoke to the attendant. But my uncle said not another word; he took the candle up and left us. I could see his hand trembled as he did so; nor was it his usual manner of retiring. The dawn was far advanced, and, overcome with watching and fa-

tigue, I sought my bed ; and my aunt went again into the invalid's room.

Several days wore away in our now melancholy town, and all was cheerless and sad in our hitherto blithesome abodes, — no merry groups were seen idling on our pier, or at the house doors,—even the laugh and play of the children seemed hushed,—nor were the boats seen dancing on the calmed and sunny waters. You might observe a few lonely scattered individuals moping along the shore, who betokened in their gait and look that for which they were seeking ; some were successful ; amongst the number were the friends of poor Will, Dick, Major, and Mary Knight. Amid all the pomp of the proudest honours given to those whom even a nation might follow to the dark cold grave with sorrow, with admiration, and with love, did I ever behold such unfeigned heart-rending regret, as was now disclosed by the weeping silent followers of these three beings so lately vivid with life, and joy, and health ! I was

young, then, and I too wept as I followed in the long, sad procession; every door was closed, every window shut; nothing was visible as we wound up the acclivity of the High Street but numerous figures, moving along so noiselessly, that the sad sob of weeping friends broke on the silence hymning a requiem for the dead. The black procession of poor Will Venture's funeral first led the way, and I thought, as the flowers were strewed by the young hands of regretting mourners—they do no more for Will than he was ever ready to do for them—scattering pleasure whenever in his power on their path. And when I observed (I now well recal my boyish thoughts) the flowering nosegays trampled beneath the feet of those who followed the white pall of Dick Major and Mary Knight, I said—Death! death! how hast thou crushed hopes which were but yesterday as fresh, as gay, as these trampled flowers; but flowers, hopes, alike are gone, faded. Yet why mourn those

gone-by unrealized expectations? Would they not in their ripeness, too, like the lost blossoms, have been plucked to scatter along the path of decaying time, and to wither in the mortal grasp. But now those young and loving ones are gone to seek hopes which know no blight, and bud but to ripen in eternity.

We reached the churchyard hanging high above that dread element, which, in so brief a period past, had worked such sad havoc,—not a ruffle was on its mighty surface,—still as the dead over whom we wept. The heavens, too, “looked like an ocean hung on high,” calm and bright as, I trusted, was the rest of the departed souls. The tears stole down the pale cheeks of the venerable Mr. Acton as all was finished; the dread sound of earth on the coffin is heard no more; soon all is shut from mortal view. And when again shall all meet?—when we, like them, shall be entering on a deathless world.

In silence, in sorrow, we past to our homes,

from the spot, now marked by three monumental stones, which, in simple truth, tell the mournful end of "The Gold Smugglers."

To return to my uncle. He was no longer a young man ; but careless habits and a recluse life had given him the appearance of having seen many more years than he had really numbered. But, let his age be what it might, he was past that period of life when it is supposed romance of thought and feeling has been completely shaded, if not wholly obliterated. Yet with Henry Acton it was not so. Retirement from the busy and cold world had allowed young impressions and young remembrances to be the sole companions of declining life. Now upwards of forty, my uncle was often transported back to the days when he had scarcely numbered twenty. That voice which on the sad night of the shipwreck struck on his ear had not, till now, sounded there for a period of eighteen years ; yet he could not be deceived in

its sweet tone. Though the name of one so loved had not been breathed for nearly an equal period, yet, had it been less cherished? No, though the thoughts of early days might have appeared to have hung unstrung on memory, it was alone because they were sacred things, — no hand dared touch them. That voice which had sounded to-night bid their chords give back “the song of the olden time,” with much of, if not all, the freshness and warmth of gone-by days. The tale of Henry Acton’s life ran thus, and as he gave it to me himself:—

“I was the younger son (alas! what are younger sons) of a very large family, seven sons and one daughter, myself the seventh. My mother, a good easy woman, who did all her grandmothers had done before, thought and said all they had thought and said. She, like them, was the wife of a clergyman; she, like them, and not like our more modern rectors’ wives,



had never ridden in her own coach, flounced and furbelowed a fine lady; a Countess in modes and fashions, patronizing the curate and his wife with not as good a grace as she would her 'fille de chambre' or husband's 'valet.' Though my good mother never did these things, how many do so to their shame, and in *their* station, to their sin; but sin and shame in this world are not always companions, for often is it sin that there is no shame. Of these matters, however, my excellent mother knew little, for she was a homely matron, a doting mother, a loving wife, and a balm to all her parish. Her face was as familiar to them as their church clock. She was their physician in grief of mind and suffering of body. She made clothes for her own and for their children; wines, puddings, and shirts; and my father saw that all went as she wished, nor waiting the bidding. I never saw so happy a couple; they were the admiration of the whole parish, and we came in also for our share; and when of a Sunday we took our way behind my

father and mother, and walked arm and arm, we might sometimes hear the ambitious foretellings of our village gossips. We are to be nothing in degree less than Chancellors and Bishops, and my lovely sister the Squire's lady, no mean honour in their estimation. Oft thus we see, even while tracking our steps to the house of God, poor human nature will occasionally shew the earthly stamp, and mingle its hopes with our best feelings ! but, doubtless, the recording angel will drop a tear on these idle wanderings of my father's kind parishioners, for it all arose out of love for their good pastor and happy family. He had been to them a leading and protecting star. His laws (for they were laws drawn from an unpolluted spring) were never disputed, for next to God's laws, in our hearts, in my mother's, and in the hearts of his parishioners, they were the most sacred ever promulgated. He was a perfect Roman Pontiff in infallibility amongst us ; but in meekness, in innocence, a very child. Though my mother was certainly as submissive

as a lamb to my father's will, she still had her ways of suggesting and finally putting those suggestions into my father's head by repetition, till they began to be part of himself, and at last were looked upon, even by himself, as original. My mother was vulgar enough to be somewhat superstitious, the only unladylike thing I ever could spy about either her thoughts or manners. Certain gossip superstitions she most undoubtedly had, such as 'certain days,' 'certain numbers' and their various never-failing consequences; one, for which no origin among the most learned could be ascribed, but that our great grandmother's mother had thought fit to promulgate such a doctrine as indubitable, was that I, being the seventh son, ought and should be a doctor. My mother first introduced the subject with a laugh at her own folly. My father and all laughed in earnest at such nonsense; but it was often talked of; and when William, and Dick, and Charles, were to be parsons, soldiers, and sailors, Harry was always to be the

doctor. My father, at last, began to argue the matter that I should do better for a clergyman.

“‘Why, Jane, I think Harry seems to love the Bible better than physic.’ Her answer was :—

“‘No child loved physic, and that all children loved the Bible ; it was so full of innocence like themselves, like their own pure hearts,’ as she thought ; and did not my father think so also ? that doctors did well to be Christian men ; in truth, that is what they ought to be. What a comfort must such be to dying sufferers ! and you tell us, you know, that body and soul have much dependence one on the other.’ And our mother would give a long quotation from one of my father’s best sermons to prove her arguments ; thus, in time, she gained her point ; and poor Harry was to be a doctor.—To smell physic which made him sick ! to study anatomy to his hourly and momentary horror, lest some mortal part should be exposed either of his friend’s or his own ! During this period, I lived

under a drawn sword,—to see my sister swing, dreadful,—one touch on her temple was instant death,—my eye was always fixed on the exact spot,—then if my father rode, if he slept after dinner; in short, I was always thinking of what *might* happen every moment in the day, and I was miserable, ever stealing from the study of bodily disease to my poetry, my fictions, and my classics. One friend I had to whom all my boyish sorrows were communicated,—William Broughton. He tried to weaken my prejudices, but in vain; he told my grievances to his uncle, a rich old Nabob, who had become our resident squire. A kinder heart than old Mr. Broughton's seldom tenanted this earthly tabernacle. He turned the subject of my sorrows over in his own benevolent mind, and then transferred the result to my father,—my father to my mother. The offer he made was at once a talisman to the gossip legion,—that I was to accompany my friend William to Oxford, at the full expense of the generous Nabob; under the proviso that if

I must have doctor's degree it must be D.D., and not M.D.—To Oxford ! to the University !—that emporium of learning and science !—Three years of probation, however, were yet to be past—how brief their span as they ran their delicious circuit ; I lived a life in them ; I drank in knowledge as a draught sweet as the waters of the Nile. Oxford ! Oxford was the salt that freshened anew every moment my thirst for it. William sympathized in all my happiness, but did not so eagerly partake of my studies. One other gentle being, too, looked on, and with childish innocence, smiled with joy because Henry Acton was glad. She was the only sister of William Broughton. The three years were gone ; we had both studied under my father's tuition, and he now pronounced us perfect scholars. I would linger yet on this loved period of boyish existence. But the day came, and Mr. Broughton's travelling carriage was at the door ; my father led the way ; William and I followed. The valet leaped on the box ;

brothers, mother, servants, and sweet sisters, stood half smiling, half weeping, on the broad steps. I must confess I saw but one smile, but one tear, and that bade me deem the world a paradise. It was the smile—the tear—of lovely Lucy Broughton. What phantoms are the dreams of youth. Lucy looked, to my young imagination, a cherub born to guide me on to joy and happiness ; but enough——. Our names were enrolled on the books of Brazen Nose College. A proud day in my heart, but not in my appearance, for I, more than Broughton, skulked and shyed, as all freshmen do, and ever will do, I ween. But short was our season of *mauvaise honte*, and ‘Richard was himself again.’ The gloss and rustle upon cap and gown was not of long duration, and soon we ceased to shew freshmen’s badges, but like old ones boasted of being Proctorized at every corner, quizzed new ones, and your book-worms—though I was something of the latter all the time myself.



“ My friend Broughton, possessing all that wealth can procure, was not long in finding, at Oxford, all men all things to him ; for with a golden bait what cannot be procured at Oxford ? — and whose wine parties like my friend Broughton’s ? Then Broughton was a handsome fellow, could play flute or fiddle, and sing a merry song with the best. Who gave such *déjeûnés* to ladies at his elegant rooms ? Who pulled a stroke-oar—who handled bat—or who touched the whip for a tandem lark—like Broughton ?—High distinction all this !—In short, it gave him the very first degree, and none dare compete with him. Though I shared all these benefits, as if I had been the brother of my friend, still I loved my books ; and I loved still more to steal from all, save the pictured image of one dear, treasured one !—With that to gaze on, though but a painted semblance, the world seemed no longer to exist. Forgotten were the gay carousals of Broughton’s splendid rooms, of which the very Nabob himself



appeared to have selected the furniture, — ottomans and sofas overlaid with the richest skins and velvets, — walls decorated with paintings of the choicest and rarest masters, — windows crowded with luxuriant flowers, — book-cases adorned with splendid volumes. Yet a strange medley, too, added to the variety, and motley groups and sounds mingled with the merry story and laugh of the thoughtless Oxonians, — for dogs, from the tiny spaniel of Blenheim beauty to the Newfoundland, reposed in their cushioned baskets, or on the bright flowers of the Brussels carpet, — while the chatter of parrots, or the cooing of love-birds, rose in wild concert with the scrape of fiddles, or the sounding of French horns and flutes, — in disordered confusion were seen fishing-tackle, cricket-bats, carpenters' tools, scientific apparatus, guns, pistols, guitars, Greek and Latin books topsyturvy, — the tout ensemble, fit image of many a young frequenter's mind ; — fine materials, ill-arranged, and sadly misplaced ! When casting

a backward glance at these jovial hours, I sometimes question my own identity when I look into present existence. Is it possible !—surely I must have been a being of another sphere !—So changes the summer leaf, when autumn's blast has flung it, seared and sapless, on the stream of time !

“ College life is but a short period in any man's life,—but who does not love it ? If they want sense, they have happiness. Though folly shuts the sage's page but too often, worldly wisdom has not yet traced her deceptive characters on the untainted heart ; the affections flow unbiassed by the whisperings of cautious suspicion ; the judgment may be unmatured, but so, also, are all the dark traits of evil passions yet unripened. Here error is the error of the head, seldom the offspring of corrupted principle. The world is taken as it goes, nor questioned if it is what it seems. The pen of experience is yet dry in the grasp ; it is for after years to fill it with bitterness, and trace the deadly ills

man is heir to ; like one of their own light skiffs, they skim along life's tide, wafted by the spring zephyrs of young Hope, nor know a doubting fear. Happy period !—a period of existence in which, like him of Sacred writ, we long to obtain from heaven the power that would bid the chariot of light be still, and Time to stay its remorseless course.

“ Our last term finished,—examination past, and all its horrors,—we returned home. I flew into a fond father's arms ; with pride the good man met and blessed me, and seemed to look on me as one who was to encircle the name of Acton with immortal honours ! I see now the smiling faces as, one after another, they entered my father's study, gazing at me as if my new-won laurels had worked some wondrous change in me. Then my next visit was to the Nabob ; and there fresh joy dawned upon my young heart,—the sweet, bright smile of Lucy Broughton,—the fresh, pouting lip that received my boyish caress, — and the half-conscious

blush, that told me how dear I was ! When William prest the fond girl to his affectionate heart she turned not from him, but spoke her congratulations. But was not the look which told me how I was received dearer to me than if she had uttered ten thousand ! Now it was, indeed, that a consciousness dawned within me of the strange, incomprehensible workings of the human mind !—the impulse that urges man to cherish destruction—to nurse within his breast the serpent that is to poison his every earthly hour, and even while he watches the coiling of its strength, and confesses that it is death, to press it to his heart,—strange contradiction ! Is it that, in loving, our own identity is lost, and we live, as it were, in another's existence ? —But to return. What was now to be done with my friend William and myself ?—why, we must amuse ourselves, for some time, with the oxes, birds, and fishes. William was well content to remain at home, for he thought, as many others thought, that Jane Acton's eyes

were as bright as stars in heaven,—her looks as fresh as the freshest morn,—her step as if a fairy trod the ground,—her mind as pure, and her heart as light,—her voice, too, as her loving father was wont to say, ‘like the voice of an angel in heaven.’ I could not sleep if I had not heard my child pour forth her hymn of thanksgiving! No one ever breathed a note while lovely Jane Acton sung to us before we parted for the night; as it was the last, so was it the first sweet sound that came to usher in another day. How, at such moments, have I seen William Broughton gaze upon her saintly countenance, as if he worshipped a spirit of some celestial realm!—This is the humble, quiet, pale Jane Acton, who now comforts me in this my lonely pilgrimage of life!—the same who has been the solace of many a sorry heart,—the friend, the guide of many a gay one. Who loves not the gentle, subdued Jane Acton? though the flush of beauty is no more;—the smile of happiness is gone for ever; her earthly

career is now but a lifeless life, and on she travels to that goal where all her hopes and all her affections are fixed for eternity.

“ Time flew on—but how ?—what shall I liken myself to ?—as one who soars amidst regions whose light allows not its inhabitants to distinguish an object that does not partake of its own brightness ; as when, with the glow of a brilliant sunset, heaven and earth become gilded and illumined,—but, suddenly, that source of eternal life sinks, and all is darkness ! I had madly deceived myself, that in cherishing the image of Lucy Broughton, I only cherished that which was perfection !—that in loving her, I only did as I would have done with some ideal image of all that was lovely !—that I was but purifying my nature, and that I might love on in secret and blessed adoration ! I felt that I had now, indeed, cruelly promised myself that which was impossible—selfishly looking only into my own bosom,—but may I not say, in my humility, I dreamed not that one exalted above me, in all

the advantages of nature and of fortune, could be bound in the same spell ? I deemed the thing impossible. I looked, I reckoned not on the pure virgin innocence of Lucy's unsophisticated mind, but on the relative situations in which we stood ; and while I had overleaped them, I still thought she never would. Yet, doubtless, had any one told me Lucy did not love me, I should have been wretched. Had any one either told me, I had wooed that love, I should have said it was false. But how could it be otherwise, when the softest whisper of her voice was rapture to my ear !—Vain equivocation was it, then, to say, ‘ words had never told her how dear she was,—words of love had never passed my lips !’ Was not every moment of our lives a revelation of the history of our feelings—of feelings which asked no words to tell their meaning and their strength ; even to the last, I idly hugged the soothing deception, that I never asked for or told that which my honour and principle forbid me to reveal. Again do I say,



vain equivocation ! — The time came, and I could no longer doubt that I was dearer to Lucy than all the world beside,—her own lips had uttered it ! Though living in almost total seclusion, still, beauty and advantages such as Lucy's were not likely, under any circumstances, to remain unknown and unsought. A rival (if I may so speak) came at last !—Now—now it was I felt the full madness of my ideal security. I thought that to see Lucy happy and blest was all I asked !—and, in the prospects which now offered themselves, had she not every right to expect much ? Handsome, rich, exalted in rank and in intellect, Lord Edward St. Clair seemed the very individual to win Lucy Broughton for a happy bride. But no ! — with coldness she turned from his attention, and, without a moment's hesitation, rejected his affections !

“All wondered, almost doubted, Lucy's sincerity in the rejection, save Jane ; she, from the beginning, knew it was folly to think it could



be otherwise; and did I ever imagine other? How could I, watching as I did every look—every movement? Did the flushing cheek, the uplifted glance, the sweet cherub smile, pass unmarked as I approached the dear girl? Was Lord Edward so met? Never. Loved Lucy! such innocence, such sincerity, merited a far different fate!

“Lord Edward saw and read her heart; but he was too noble to resent it. The morning before he left us, he said to me, ‘Acton, I never thought to envy a fellow-creature as I envy you.’

“I felt the blood rush to my temples, and I turned from him as if I had not heard him. We were walking together, and I stooped as if to pick up something. But he took no thought of my confusion; he only remembered, what he deemed my happier fate.

“‘Why,’ said he, ‘attempt disguise to one who now feels a consolation in finding the affections he cannot win are placed where they

will be valued as they ought. Acton, Lucy Broughton loves you.'

"I answered not. An ice-bolt could not have struck a more dread chill than I experienced at that moment. I leaned against a tree for support.

" 'Acton, what I have said cannot be unknown to you.'

" 'It was—it is—it never can—it never must be true!' I could bear no more, and I rushed from him. I hid myself from everybody, throwing myself on a grass plat close behind a small summer-house, but so as to be concealed from observation. I lay in a state of deep and severe suffering; but one path was open to me. What! fly from home!—from Lucy!—sever every link at once! Perhaps,—and the hope was consolation,—the heart may break in the struggle.

"After I had remained some time in this state, I heard the step of Lucy. I dared not for worlds, in my present state of mind, enter before

her presence, and I could escape without being seen or heard. She was weeping. I could just see her; she leant her head on her hands as they lay on the rustic table. Lucy in tears! But no, I moved not, so firmly was I now determined what course to pursue. Her brother came in to her.

“ ‘ Lucy, love, what is the matter? tell your own William,’—and he placed his arms round her, and kissed the tears from her flushed cheek. ‘ What can it be?’—for she sobbed, and spoke not a word. ‘ What!’ said her brother, trying to smile, ‘ has Lucy been playing the coquette? Shall I call Edward back, and tell him so?’

“ ‘ Is he gone?’

“ ‘ I trembled as I heard her. What! Lucy a coquette! Impossible.

“ ‘ Then, you are sorry?’

“ ‘ Sorry! No, William; Lucy can never love any one!’

“ ‘ Never, Lucy? Yes, Lucy; you do love some one at this present moment.’

“ ‘ But what—what avails that, William ?’

“ ‘ What avails it, Lucy ? Why, Henry worships the very ground you walk on.’

“ ‘ He never told me so, William’—and the blushing girl hid her face from even a brother’s eye.

“ ‘ I know it, Lucy ; he would not be the Henry Acton we love, if he had. But come, Lucy, let us hope ; for when Jane Acton is my wife, we may work wonders with my uncle and father ; and Jane shall be my wife before two years more.’

“ Lucy smiled again in her brother’s face ; he wiped the tears from her eyes, and they left the summer-house together. I lay still, repeating, ‘ But come, Lucy, let us hope’—yet my better reason prevailed ; I said, perhaps that hope may never be realized, and then Lucy’s happiness is wrecked for ever ; now she is young I will fly from her, and Lucy will learn to forget.

“ Severe—dreadfully severe—was the part I

was about to perform. I determined to go to Mr. Broughton, confess all my own weakness, and then quit his kind protection, if not for ever, at least as long as Lucy remained beneath it. I nerved myself and went to his study. The cold drops stood on my temples; my knees shook under me; I scarcely saw—I scarcely drew my breath; the door of the study stood open; I was before him. He, good easy man, was seated in quiet apathy in his elbow-chair; his gouty feet resting on his cushions; fortunately, he held a newspaper before him, so that I had some moments to recover myself.

“ ‘ Harry, is that you—so Lord Edward’s off. Can you make it out, my boy?—the naughty girl.’ How the blood rushed through my veins,—I dared not answer. ‘ But, Harry, my boy, I was just thinking of you.’ ”

“ ‘ Of me, Sir,’ scarcely able to utter the words.

“ ‘ Why, yes. Is that anything new?’ ”

“ ‘ No, indeed, Sir.’ ”

“ ‘ What — what now ? But come — see, should you not like this, my lad.’

“ He shewed me an advertisement in the paper, but the letters swam before my confused sight. It was the advowson of a living to be sold.

“ ‘ Should you like that ?’ he asked again, looking up into my pale face. ‘ Why, Harry, boy, what’s the matter ? you look like a dried turnip.’

“ ‘ Sir, I am not worthy of all this thought—this kind affection.’

“ ‘ Why—what have you done?—*Debt, debt?*’

“ ‘ No, no, Sir. Worse—ten thousand times worse.’

“ ‘ What then ? Seduced the chambermaid, or poached on old Hogle Rigg’s Manor.’

“ ‘ Nothing of the sort.’

“ ‘ Then what the d——I have you done ?

“ ‘ Dared to love the sister of William Broughton, the niece of my benefactor !’

“ ‘ Odd zounds and furies !’ — and Mr.

Broughton absolutely kicked the stool from his gouty foot, and stood upright, facing me in a state of rage I had never before witnessed. I trembled and wished the room would fall and crush me. ‘Odd zounds and furies, you young rascal, you dare tell me so to my face—dare tell my niece. Now I see it all. She shall marry Lord Edward.’

“ ‘Listen—pray listen, Mr. Broughton.’

“ ‘Odd zounds, I have listened to too much already !—love Lucy Broughton ?’

“ But I have never told her so, Mr. Broughton. I am to blame—to blame beyond redemption, doubtless, in your eyes, as much as I am in my own ; I came but to tell you so, that I might bid farewell and thanks to the best and kindest of friends. To Miss Broughton I have never whispered a sound a sister might not hear ; and you, Mr. Broughton, are the first, and shall be the last, the confession of my presumption shall ever be made to.’ He paused a moment, looked as if he almost doubted my statement.

“ ‘ No, no ! I never knew Henry Acton verge from the strictest honour and principle—your hand.’ I gave him my cold hand. ‘ What can I do, Henry ?’

“ But, odd zounds ! and his fury was again rising ; but I checked it by saying, ‘ What can you do, Mr. Broughton ? I came not, believe me, to ask what you could do—for I looked for, I expected nothing. I came but to tell you how, in justice to myself, I must act ; for, without some explanation on my part, how could I quit my home, my friends.’ I ceased, for I felt my emotion was overcoming me.

“ ‘ And you *must* go, Henry’—and Mr. Broughton seemed to forget even Lucy in the thought of losing me.

“ After some short, but seemingly painful rumination, he said, ‘ Go, Henry, I will talk to your father.’

“ ‘ Shall I not see you again, kind, best of friends ?’ I took his hand, pressed it to my lips, and he said—



“ ‘ Yes, Henry, for I love you as my own. But, go, now.’ ”

“ I thought I saw a tear in the good man’s eye as he once more looked up in my face, but the door closed on me. I had done my duty, but I was miserable—miserable for ever. And Lucy ! was I to see her no more. I longed, yet dreaded to do so, conscious that if I did, my best resolutions must give way before her. What ! never to gaze upon her—never to meet that eye again. Well ! Heaven’s will must be done. The deep—deep despair of that moment—one look at the last spot in which I beheld her. It was in the summer-house—how often had I read to Lucy and Jane in that spot. I arrived at it,—I rested my head and hands on the very table she had a few hours before wet with her tears—mine now fell on it. Forgive this unmanly weakness ; but when the strongest and the best affections are warring with reason and judgment, there is something dreadful in the combat. The part I was now performing was no more

than duty demanded ; but what a sacrifice was laid on her altar. I remained for some time lost to everything but the bitterness of what was challenged from me. I suddenly felt the pressure of a gentle hand on my arm,—I looked up ; it was Lucy who was beside me.

“ ‘ Henry, dear, what is the matter ? how ill you look.’

“ ‘ Ill, dearest—I am not ill, but mad.’

“ ‘ Henry, Henry,’ and she burst into tears.

“ I clasped her frantically to my bosom. ‘ Forgive, my best, my only love, this wild farewell—it is my last.’

“ She looked fearfully at me. ‘ Henry, what mean you ?’

“ ‘ We part, Lucy, never to meet on this earth again. But here I swear none other but Lucy shall hold a place in a heart that is breaking to conceal all the cherished love it bears her.’

“ ‘ Then, Henry, take (if we *must* part)—take this remembrance, that Lucy makes the same sacred vow.’

“ ‘ No, Lucy—I dare not—I will not.’

“ More we said, but they were words of fond, sad sorrow. We parted, and I never again beheld Lucy Broughton—never since that period has her name passed my lips. If by chance it has fallen on mine ear, the very life of my heart would seem to rush in floods from its source. Time hath robbed youth of all, all young passion ;—time hath seared all the fresh looks of manhood ;—time hath stolen strength from the mind, power and vigour from the body ;—but time hath never withered, never effaced such affection as that I bore to Lucy. It was the first dictate of affection in the untouched heart. It was the first light that told me to rejoice in creation—over every action, over every thought, it has ever borne sway ;—it was the era of existence, and from it did life date its character and its action. I felt it was as pure as heaven’s own fire, and that it would be part of the soul’s own essence,—would yet burn unquenched in the mansions of eternity, however circumstances

might conspire to crush its earthly consummation.

“I met my father and family in the evening of this eventful day. No allusion by words was made to the conversation with Mr. Broughton, but a thousand actions spoke both my good mother’s and father’s pity for me. By the prayers, the lessons he selected for the evening, it was evident my considerate father did think it a trial for a young heart. As he read, he dwelt on the loveliness of resignation under suffering; that it was not only necessary but ever acceptable before Heaven. He taught that night, with strong emphasis, that however our actions may be within the limits of our own control, the result of such must be left in the hands of *Him* who alone can judge all things. My father looked not at the affections of the heart through the false medium of worldly colouring,—judging from the pure instruction derived from his own;—as he had loved my mother, and she had loved him, next to her

Creator, as the dearest object of this world, and the fondest hope of the next.

“It had been proposed some time before that I was to attend William on a continental tour, and my father spoke of it in the course of the evening as a thing I knew was to take place immediately. ‘You ought to feel highly flattered, Henry, for Mr. Broughton says, he thinks you are quite steady enough to take charge of William on his travels; he tells me your departure is fixed for the day after to-morrow, and that I am to go up to London to set you afloat. William Broughton’s health wants a warmer climate.’ I made no answer, nor did my father seem to require it, for he went on talking of the route we were to take.—‘You will be absent three years at least, I should think, Henry.’ ‘Yes, Sir,’—and I turned to see how poor Jane bore these tidings, but she was gone. Considerate parent!—he had sent her out of the room on some excuse, for she did not yet know how soon we were to quit home.

“The sad day of departure came ; how unlike the one on which we had first gone to Oxford. Poor Jane, how the tears glistened in her eyes every moment ! But she had hope ; I had none. Three years only were named as that which was to divide William and her ; he would then be his own master, and every one foresaw that nothing could separate him from Jane Acton.

“A few hours before our departure, Mr. Broughton sent for me. Words, like painting skill, often in vain essay to give existing reality,—its truths so throw a veil over the countenance of woe they might fail in portraying. No language could describe my feelings at this moment. I pursued my path to Broughton Hall like a blinded being ; a sort of torpor pervaded all my senses. I was once more in the study ; once more I stood before my friend. Our leave-taking was short, but all that was kind on his part ; I trust, all that was grateful on mine. With solemnity and seriousness he gave me his blessing, pressed me to his bosom affectionately, and

then placed something in my hand. I looked at it, but I saw not what it was,—it was a check for £1000. So bewildered, so overcome was I, that, for a month after, I never recalled having received it, for at the very moment I did so, I had heard a step approach the door; it was the step of Lucy; it lingered a moment and then stole away. ‘Farewell, Henry! farewell, my boy!’ yet I moved not; a violent ringing of the drawing-room bell seemed to rouse me. I heard feet passing quick; at last the servant entered and said—

“ ‘Sir, Sir!—Miss Broughton is so ill!’

“ William hurried next into the room, and told us he trusted it was only a fainting-fit.

“ Mr. Broughton said, ‘Henry, go! go! dearest boy!’

“ I rushed from the house to my own room. My mind seemed completely overthrown; but the sweet soft voice of Jane came like music to beguile my wretchedness, and soothe me to reason. We spoke not of Lucy, yet all our con-

versation tended to that source which was the cause of this sad separation. And as I leant on one of the rustic windows, and looked out on my father's blooming, neat garden, on his comfortable but small parsonage, and then beyond, over nature's less circumscribed beauties, the wide-spreading woods as they rose on either side of a small valley that led on to the broad expanse of the ocean, now blue beneath a mid-day sun, with here and there a white sail seen on its unruffled surface, I said to Jane, 'What can the greatest wealth or grandeur give to human beings more than these and united affection.—The mind that is pure before its God surely can want no more than all these blessings,—shaped by his hand,—infused by his spirit. Beneath this roof, Jane, is ample, not alone for the comforts, but luxuries of life; and time was when it sheltered gay hearts. But what would ambition say to this humble dwelling! Ambition—love of worldly distinction—what art thou like? Radiant avalanches in distance reflect-



ing transcendent hues. But what composed of ? Nature's coldest particles ! Is ambition frigid ? It, like the fatal avalanche, when meeting a touch—a sound—that strikes against it, pours destruction around,—making wreck of all within its influence,—overwhelming all beneath it !

“ I pass over scenes of beauty where a Divine hand shewed itself in sublimity, in glory, and in softness ; scenes on which classic taste had stamped her immortal impress ; yielding to the mind and imagination an ever-exciting interest. We mingled in scenes of luxury, splendour, and even, perhaps, of dissipation. Throngs of this peopled world held intercourse with us. In Paris we were courted, sought, and, we confessed, amused. In Italy, doubtless, we found still more to soothe and captivate, but yet we found not happiness,—that thing of circumstances, not of country or climate,—that which springs but from the mind, and which each individual mind alone can model. Two years passed thus ; and what then ?—I followed the cherished companion—

the brother of Lucy Broughton—to the grave ! Decline, that smiling thief of destruction, robbed me of my friend. As an infant's slumber, death passed over him ;—but in that hour my Jane's image was with him.

“ ‘ Tell Jane that I loved her when all other earthly love was given to heaven ! Jane Acton should have been, as she ever was, the chosen, dearest one of her William's affection. Give her, dear Henry, this last kiss from my dying lips !’

“ I bent my face over my friend ; before I raised my head again, he was no more.

“ The forlorn, the destitute being I stood then ! Two years more I wandered abroad, and then again I found myself an inmate of good Mr. Broughton's hospitable mansion. My own home was changed,—my brothers scattered ;—my mother and father still cheerful, resigned, and active. Yet was it not the home of my boyhood. Was it the tone of my mind, or its character, that varied ?—Dear Jane, the once joyous sister, a

shadow of herself, yet placid, uncomplaining. Those who had not known her in happier hours would have thought it was nature, and not misfortune, that rendered her that still quiet being she had become.

“To Mr. Broughton I was a solace, and never allowed to quit his side. He had given me a valuable living, and also the small one I now hold. I loved it for its situation, and it was near the home of my childhood;—the inhabitants, too, I loved; simplicity and honesty were their characteristic. The great ones, and cold proud ones, did not dwell amongst them. I gave up the rich living to my brother William, perhaps for his name,—perhaps because he was a husband and a father; and when good Mr. Broughton had numbered his days, I came to dwell here where now I trust to lay my bones.

“But where was the sister of William—Lucy Broughton? No more? Had she wedded and gone to other climes? Yes,—and if wealth, distinction, beauty, splendour, are happiness,

Lady Moreland is blessed indeed ! And who prays she may be so more fervently than Henry Acton. My tale is done."

He who told that tale is now beside the couch of that Lucy Moreland, now a mother, but a wife no longer.

Lucy, soon after her brother's death, had been summoned, by a father's mandate, from her uncle's side. Strange to say, though years had been since those brothers had parted as friends, they now, though in the same country, did not meet. It had been said that the good Nabob would willingly have won his brother's consent to give Lucy to Henry Acton. Be that as it may, Mr. John Broughton returned hastily to England from India, sent for his daughter to London, and in six weeks she was the bride of Sir George Moreland, Governor of India, a man whose wealth was thousands upon thousands,—connexions of the first stamp,—manners of distinguished elegance,—and high personal advantages. But, like Lucy's father, he was a cold,

calculating man of the world,—selfish in all his feelings, proud of all his possessions.

It is doubtful if he ever loved his beautiful wife ; but she was his wife, and was unrivalled in loveliness. It was something to be envied for. And was Lucy happy ?—but her father was insensible to all her tears,—deaf to all her prayers,—though carried a fainting bride from the altar, yet he had willed, and succeeded, and was satisfied. If a pang of remorse was awakened when he looked at his suffering child, he silenced it by the salvo of—“I have made an enviable match for my daughter, and what right has she to complain ?” Still years went on, and he saw that daughter a creature of breathing listlessness,—aroused from torpor by no pleasure,—no sorrow. Still what then ! she moved a queen in eastern splendour,—he was flattered,—her husband was proud,—for them this was sufficient.

Lucy had given birth to three children, but they had not lived beyond infancy. One grew

up to call her mother. She possessed now something to love—something to live for. She urged and prayed to return, at least for a short time, with this child to England, and as her own health was rapidly declining, she obtained, at last, an unwilling consent. Joyfully she entered into rapid preparations, but before they could be accomplished, she became a widow. Did she mourn ? No !—she was above affectation ; she had been a dutiful, an obedient wife, but never a loving one.

Bidding her father adieu, she sailed for England, and was the only survivor (with her child) that was saved to tell the tale of the *Ariadne*—the vessel which had been so fatally wrecked on these her native shores. In the very haven of that home of rest she had looked to,—where in girlhood she had sported and been blest,—even now was she sheltered beneath the very roof of him who had been her joyous companion in those halcyon days ; and who had been, amidst all changing of circumstances and time, still

an object of secret, pure, and sacred remembrance, the memory of whose existence had flung over every scene of life a misty and softening power, shedding an influence which, though cherished, was undefined.

Henry Acton, though now no longer the ardent lover of years gone by, was still the fond, the attached, of long tried time. Though affection in either heart might be less impassioned, it was not less devoted, less sincere. While lingering over days past, hope whispered of those yet to come,—but one after the other stole away ! Jane Acton was the constant attendant of the invalid.

We all talked of happier times. The gossips, too, whispered that the parson was not such an old man, and that now Mr. Acton would be as gay as the merriest. And then, too, some talked of all the gold he would have,—for no one, they said, could count Miss Lucy's wealth—Miss Lucy did they say ?—but no matter ; they had ever argued she ought never to have been my Lady Moreland. But all things were for the

best ; she had done her duty, and was now to be rewarded.

Then her sweet, beautiful child ! she was to be married, and was to live among them at Broughton Hall. Good, innocent people, what day-dreams !

But no, my kind uncle's tale was not so to run. Each day hope grew fainter,—life waned and waned. Yet if the body was gradually decaying in vital strength, the pure essence of soul was acquiring fresh existence. And if in youth Henry Acton had first breathed a new creation into the fond heart of the lovely girl, how much more glorious was the light which he now infused to the more matured mind. Lucy had lived many years in a foreign land, and not amidst the sweet devotion of Cheriton Parsonage,—though religion had never slumbered in her pure bosom, yet was it not that warm, vital spark which led on the saintly spirit of Henry Acton,—that wrapping of the soul within its sacred mantle ; guarding it, as it were, from the baser and lower degradation of man's nature.



These impressions had once been springing up in her, but circumstances had every way tended, if not to eradicate, at least to weaken them.

As earth grew dim to the sufferer's sight, my uncle's heavenly teaching opened new worlds of before unimagined glory; and as he traced the celestial path of peace to the eternal mansions of rest, the dying Lucy almost longed to tread them, feeling that he must also soon pass along them. One link yet bound her to earth,—it was her child,—but her latest power appointed Mr. Acton her sole protector; for in this respect, Sir George Moreland had given her full control. She had been left guardian of both her child's person and fortune. With resigned trust, she now committed her to Mr. Acton's care; and said, "Jane will love the babe for the memory of him to whom her days have been given. Henry, your love, your affection, I can never doubt." My uncle was seated beside her. She turned towards him, laid her wasted and fevered hand on his arm. "Doubt them not,

Lucy, I will be a father to her." I saw my uncle's lip quiver as he endeavoured to answer. The day was closing in heaven above and in earth beneath ; serenity was everywhere visible ; twilight was gradually stealing over sea and land, yet in shadows so illumined that it resembled more the first break of dawn than the last shades of eve. A few white sails still opened to the gentle breeze, and floated along the hushed bosom of the ocean,—stealing their homeward way like the meek sufferer that now gazed on them. She was going her way to her everlasting dwelling with soul not more ruffled than that ocean's bosom, — with hopes, too, as boundless. The faint red beams of a sinking sun were slightly tinging the distant French coast. They, too, imaged her last thoughts as they yet lingered amidst mortality ; they would soon depart, and their source also would rise in light amidst other regions. Now remained but one shining star ; it was all that borrowed not a character from the surrounding

tints. That grew into brilliancy as all other objects passed into shade. Lucy's bright, languid eye was turned up to it.

"Is it not a lovely night, Henry? I dreamt not of this cherished blessing; amidst such a scene as this to sink to rest! I feel only as if I were passing into a sweet slumber, in which I am to behold visions of unspeakable glory." She paused, drew a quicker breath, and leant forward as if to catch the dewy air; a fevered spot was on her cheek. "Jane, I would that Emma was with us;—wake her not, but place her beside me. There, sweet innocent,—see, Henry, how soft she sleeps,—death is no more, dearest, best beloved. Look yonder at that starry light," (with an expression of angelic holiness she again raised her head;) "is it not dazzling; or is it that life has so waned that all else seems dim. Thou, Henry, hast been to me, in this my last dark hour, such a light. May that peace thou hast poured on my soul be all thy own. To have my eyes so closed,—all I so fondly

loved beside me ! She pressed her lips to her child's,—her eye was raised to heaven once more,—her voice murmured softly as a whisper,—the red spot on her cheek grew fainter,—her last gaze was on him who sat beside her,—the last word, “ Henry, we part to meet ; farewell, dearest, best.” The tint of life was past ; that form lay a breathless corpse on the bosom in which it had ever been enshrined.

# ANNEE OWEN;

OR,

## THE CURSE.

---

“ Fo thus  
I curse him from my sight for evermore !  
All bonds I break between us !—as he broke.”

“ A fever at the core,  
Fatal to him that bears—”

“ THEN I *am* forgiven, quite forgiven, Annee.  
And you will come to the village festival?”

“ Yes, Frederic. Kate will not be there,  
will she? Kate is too good to go to dances,—  
is she not, Frederic?”

“ Indeed, I scarcely know what you call *too*  
good ; but if Kate does go, what need you care.”

“ Well, if you say I need not care, I will not  
do so ; but——”

“ But what, sweetest,” asked Frederic, as stopping, the half-blushing, half-smiling girl held down her head. Her lover pressed her to say on, and then she added—

“ Frederic knows how his own Annee is envious of even the sweet flowers, the green wood, and yonder shining sea, if they draw his thought or eye from her.” The bright, beautiful Annee’s hand was on the arm of her lover; her dark, soft eye looked up into his countenance with woman’s fondest devotion.

“ Then Annee has no reason to envy aught; for what claims thought or eye when thou art near? and that you know.”

“ Yes, Frederic, I do know it; but I ask so much that I always fear it will be impossible to obtain it; yet to-day I am happy, quite as happy as all around us.”

It was a lovely spot where now these young lovers stood. What is a gala meeting unless heart and spirits are there to gladden its richness?—what heart and spirits are to that gala

day was now enveloping earth and sky—all so melting, so softening, — and much did these young lovers add to the picture—both fresh and buoyant as beauty and youth can look.

Hope, that sunny child of spring, was with them. Hope, too, robed in the light she wears but once in life. It is when love first decks her—when all of real which mingles with the ideal is joyous—the utopian world of young imagination. Yet, even though canopied with heaven's own blue, how often comes the overclouding which enshrouds the bolt that shall burst to desolate and to crush. But sunshine was with these happy ones to-day.

It was at the gate of the village church they stood ;—the memory of other days was not theirs now. As they loitered beside this heaven-devoted structure, all that was robbed from the present was only given to monument of the future. The little simple structure was ivy-wreathed ; time-marked darkness circled around its tapering spire and stone-worked windows ;—

its churchyard was one which affection had decorated, and nature adorned.

It spoke nothing of gloom or despair ;—it told of that which follows the dead beyond their earthly incarceration ;—it told of that which belongs to our never-dying essence—the devoted heart — for over many a green grassy grave hung in pensive weeping the willow's fragile branching ; the rose and woodbine interlaced the iron guard that fenced from the idler's careless step the stone which covered the remains of cherished ones ; the deep purple violet and many a wild flower's sweetness freshened the evening's gale as it swept over that sacred spot. An aged yew-tree, as if the legacy of gone-by time, was there. A seat was round it, where many a village gossip, I ween, had told her tale. The lovers soon occupied it. Did their eyes wander through the verdant vistas as they bore off into the wooded glades ? or did they rest upon the virgin fairness of the white sail as it won its summer way along the shining path of



the deep that lay stretching in the distance before them, girded by many a rocky cliff? Did they trace the curving lines of the dark mimic bays, whose waters fretted there in shadow, like sorrow's lash, which wears the lone, sad heart of many a child of suffering?

No! for they were now looking upon their cottage home. There it nestled like a bird of peace amidst its embowering shades, telling forth, as it were, a song of a thousand endearing promises of happiness, of affection.

This cottage stood a little back from the churchyard—a rustic dwelling it was, of bloom and beauty. The thatched pentroof projected from the building, and was formed into a verandah by gnarled trunks bound with creepers of purple and crimson hues, myrtle blossoms, pure and snowy as primeval life, with leaves green and fresh as its expanding advance. Beneath the trellice of eglandine and rose peeped out the now open casement; the garden, too, was in view, with its flower-beds, amidst their

emerald setting of green sward, glittering gaudy as gems of oriental preciousness.

“ That is to be our home, Annee. Mrs. Owen says all would go wrong if Annee was not there.”

“ And is it not a pretty home, Frederic ? You speak as if you did not love to think upon it as our home.”

A slight pouting was visible upon that ruddy lip ; a little shade gathered upon that fair brow ; to one, whose observation rested not with the eye of love upon the beautiful speaker, perhaps at this moment the change would scarcely have been marked, it was so faintly visible.

Annee Owen was decidedly handsome, yet when one read the changes of those faultless features, it was painful, in one so young, to catch the sudden dark overshadowing which flitted across them, calling up, as it were, the spirit of another being ; for their darkness was as appalling as the sweetness of their softness was spell-binding.

When the eye of raven shade would flash and dazzle, it was with something of almost madness; yet when the jetty curl of the long lash was raised, and revealed in its uplifted look love or sadness, who could meet that glance of Annee Owen and not confess the magic that dwells in woman; each feature bore character and stamp of light and shade; no painter's pencilling ever gave stronger in all its force. The Hebe lip, which touched Elysium's nectared cup, never glowed more blandly than Annee's when she smiled in joy; nor Juno's pride ever curled in deeper scorn, than when Annee spoke the words of bitterness.

Her cheek was ever colourless as a Magdalen's, yet a hue whiter than Italian art has given that pictured penitent could be seen on Annee's, when emotion called back its life blood to her jealous heart.

Annee Owen had ever been an only child, and in latter years the darling of a widowed mother's home. Her station in life was not exalted, though her mind was highly cultivated,

for her father had been a man of much literary pursuit and high attainments.

Annee, the favourite and plaything of the clergyman's family from her earliest infancy, had been thrown into a circle beyond her own station,—not that this had ever an influence in weakening or rendering her vain or proud,—she was neither,—her heart was too full of keen, vivid, never-slumbering sensitiveness. She lived but for those she loved,—few were the objects reflected on that mirror, but once traced on Annee's affections, they became idols of worship.

To Frederic Stanley she had been affianced from girlhood's earliest remembrance; and if a woman ever knew all that passion reveals of fondness and adoration, Annee confessed it for the handsome and amiable Frederic Stanley.

There was much of love in his breast for Annee Owen, but there was also much of fear. To the quiet and melancholy mind of Stanley, the fitful, varying, and passionate one of Annee brought painful doubts and misgivings for their future peace. The unchecked glow of jealousy

which would burst out even at "trifles light as air," was to him, though a flattering, still a dreaded thing. And no being ever practised that strange mysterious art over the destinies of a beloved one more than Annee. And strangely mysterious is that passion which inthrals the peace of those it loves, for that which it wounds is dearer to it than aught else on earth!

Nothing, perhaps, tells so much of our fallen nature as jealousy, for nothing speaks so strong of selfishness; for the thing most prized is often sacrificed to our own unreasoning whim,—that frenzied whim which deafens to the voice of conviction and truth, and in its mad course, overwhelms all of happiness.

Though this shadow of character was around her, there were spots of brightness, beautiful and endearing. Save on the one point, Annee was the most unselfish, the most affectionate of creatures. A depth and singularity also was about her that rendered her an object of intense interest to those who understood her.

But that interest resembled more in its feelings what the melancholy loveliness of a moon-lit evening excites, rather than the young, glowing fervour of early day.

She owned a mind beyond her years in strength and power, for she had not yet seen twenty summers. Still there was a strange weakness of never-slumbering superstition in all she thought or felt; but when the stupendous mind of a Johnson could descend to calculate upon the results of a right or left foot first touching a threshold, upon its influence on his destiny, we must not regard either Stanley or Annee with too much severity, when we say they were superstitious.

Stanley, perhaps, felt these singular prejudices of sybil gossip in a stronger or more lasting degree than Annee, inasmuch as Stanley's mind, though not so vivid in catching impressions as Annee's, was one of intense feeling, hidden, but not less existent.

Everything that was overshadowed, or bore

relation to romance, was an idol with him ; wild, dark, and imaginative, weirded and unshapely forms, such as told the prophecy to murdering Macbeth, had ten thousand more charms for him than legends of a bright and fairy land. The ghostly visions of a Richard's dream murdered not his rest, but were more familiar companions to his picturing fancy than all the lightness of a Miranda's Ariel agent. The stronger impulses of our souls are ever concealed from the general eye ; for in minds of powerful feeling, delicacy infolds them as carefully as nature guards from vulgar ken the jewelled gems of earth.

Annee alone wandered with him amidst these caverned recesses, and robbed from thence all their hidden treasures ; and livelier ones would have smiled to have listened to these young lovers, talking over their dreamy world of strange things.

Seated beneath the aged yew, they were now dwelling upon the joy which would arise, if the

spirits of the dead could hold converse with the living.

“ Yes,” said Annee ; “ how blest is it when I think I see him, speak to him ; sometimes, when only stars are waking, and it is all still, as I would it ever were when you talk dear things of love, I come and sit yonder, by my own father’s grave.”

And she pointed to a simple sable urn, over which mantled a willow of singular luxuriance.

“ And is there no fear with you, Annee,” asked her lover.

“ Fear, Frederic, no ! What could I fear in the presence of a parent, and that one who has cast off the garb of earth and is robed in light ; at such moments I weep not over his memory. I have seen him, Stanley, rise from out that tomb with such angel bearing, and call on his child to follow him to the glory that enshrouds him above !”

A soft mild voice broke in to interrupt Annee’s ravings, with—



“Annee Owen—talk not thus, save in trust and humility, of mortal putting on immortality. Is it for fallen creatures such as we are to speak thus of sinful erring man being raised above judgment and punishment ; besides, the spirits of the dead walk not forth to scare the living.”

Annee paid not the ceremonies of greeting to the pretty speaker, as she turned to answer her with eye lighted and cheek paled again—

“And is it less presumption of Kate Marlow to cast a shadow of doubt on the final blessedness of Frank Owen. He who passed along his career in peace and good will with all of kindred, of friend, and foe. No presuming righteousness was his,—no phylactery of pride was his,—Kate Marlow ; and, moreover, he was the loving father of the child who spoke—he could not come to scare her.”

Annee burst into tears, and ran impatiently into the home which had once sheltered that loved parent ; while the little, quiet, demure

Kate seated herself, apparently unmoved, by the side of the agitated lover.

“ I meant her no wrong, and that she will confess ere her tears are dry. She knows I love her, and that I loved her father. Heed her not, Frederic ; or if you do, correct her for her future peace’ sake ; ’tis a goodly soil, but no one looks to what is planted in it. And you, most of all, Frederic, misdirect, though you cherish her ; yes, you lead her to dream of strange wild things which her mother’s gentleness has never known how to correct, which her father’s far off knowledge laid foundation for ; and did I not regard her too dearly, I would say—I pity you, Frederic Stanley.”

Perhaps, unconsciously, there was more than pity in the innocent blue eye, as it was lifted up to express that feeling.

Still all was so regulated, so mechanical about Kate, that if a warmer glow was in her heart at that moment, it was as quickly called back into place as it was expressed.

Kate's whole attire and demeanour betokened neatness to minutia ; everything was in keeping, —the little close straw bonnet tied down with the simple fawn-coloured ribbon,—the plain silk gown of the same shade, with the white kerchief pinned in quaker exactness,—the braided hair,—the close cap,—all told Kate's calling ; but nothing of fanaticism or pride (notwithstanding Annee's sarcasm) mingled with the simplicity of her methodism.

It is true Kate loved to raise her voice at the evening conventicle, but as she did so, her spirit went with it purely and holily ; though Kate loved not the dance and glee of merry-making, yet she turned not reprovingly from them ; one festival she always frequented, though poor Annee trusted she would not do so this year, that which was called the "village festival," which was kept on the first of May, in Oakfield Park, in commemoration of a happy tale of rejoicing.

The widow of one of the Squires of Oakfield Park for many years deemed her only son was

lost at sea, and thus bereaved, she mourned. At last, one smiling morn, of a Mayday, a white sail was seen to near the coast of D——; from out that vessel, with white sail, was observed a stranger to land, and in him was recognised the now wasted and changed widow's son. Then rang out the rounded peal of the village church, and merriment, feasting, and bonfire, told of the glad return.

The widow's tears were dried, and she bid the board be spread wide and long, and music and revelry called many to the feast. So cherished was that day of rejoicing, that year returned after year and witnessed its commemoration.

Generation had passed after generation and the same féstival was kept on the first of May; for, when dying, this grateful widow had left a legacy to still keep up the remembrance, with command that the names of all who had witnessed and celebrated her happiness at the first should be preserved, and the privilege handed down to all their nearest of kin of attending the féstival; and

who, on this day's return, forgot their root and branching ?

That gay first of May had now come again, and many happy hearts were assembled in the Park of Oakfield.

It was now the home and possession of Mr. Lucy, the Rector of the parish.

And whose countenances so beaming in kindness and benevolence as those of the Rector and his children ? It made one glad and forget all sadness to hear but the merry laugh of the glee-some family ; no care seemed theirs but the care for others' weal ; though the descendants of noble, wealthy kindred, no pride was with them ; with dignity, but humility, they mingled with their parishioners, and, in good fellowship with all grades, each knew them as each loved them. The bond of Christian unity was amongst them. And the good Rector, with heart and countenance overflowing with benevolence, had his smile, his jest, his kindness, for each and all.

Never was so completely displayed the full force of the term—" the father of his flock"—than in

Mr. Lucy ; he was like one of the noble monarchs of his own Park, that might be seen spreading and flourishing greenly and happily there, sheltering all who sought its circuit and yielding freshness to every eye that looked upon it.

This May morn, joyful tidings to each anxious eye, was arrayed in sunshine.

“ There’s not a budding boy or girl this day

But is got up, and gone to bring in May ;”

May, that youthful prime, just what England was, when the Maying customs and rustic festivals of her unlettered people mantled her in robes wove by the fairy fingers of Romance. Her modern gigantic march in civilization, science, and knowledge, may exalt her to a height from which she may look down, and from those lofty pinnacles may contemplate the immeasurable walk she has trodden over, the power she has compassed, the new face she has put on ; and may not her bewildered senses grow dizzy with the review of such startling advancement ? May no sigh be breathed for those gone-by times, when “ ignorance was

bliss?" May not the proud steed's strength be yet too mighty for the rider's skill, direct he ever so wittingly?

See what an awakening is everywhere; from the lisping child to the aged grandsire—all are now roused to look on things that held place of yore but amidst kingly palaces and lordly dwellings, amidst divines and legislators—all now stand up in our streets and in our highways, and sound the voice of dictation and revelation; the trumpet of liberty and independence echoes through the land, and man calls on fellow man to enter the list for right and equality, at least in mind. Liberty, that word of danger,—that word, so glorious in its noblest use—so fearful in its evil abuse! The temple of Janus closed its gates when peace smiled; opened them when war frowned. Such is liberty! it either excludes all of wrong, or extends to all that is destructive.

May Providence direct that impetus of roused intellect and awakened knowledge,



which has given a new form and a new mind to the whole mass of this nation's people—for as a greater light does it stand in the hemisphere of creation; and may England never have to look back in regret on the “olden time,” as age does on the days of youth and innocence, or as the eye, falling on heated summer's scorched ripeness, regrets May's freshness and budding.

It is to be trusted not; but who sighs not over her gone romance, her day of heartiness and hospitality; but all are gone; romance, grown old, no longer walks our land. Romance, thou fascinating child of allurements, if not the offspring of usefulness, thou art the parent of beauty! and to-day the village of Oakfield might have been the village of more than a century back,—so full of the fun and frolic of sweet Maying; but it had ever over it the impress of by-gone time,—

“The little cot where mantling woodbine falls,  
The village matron keeps her school.”

Then its green, the playground of noisy, happy



childhood, the occasional pasture of stray donkey or cackling goose ; here the aged tree, spreading its broad ample branches over the circular seat around it, where the old village crony sits her down to tell her gossip marvels of pixies, elves, and goblins, the wonder-working cures of charmed spells : poor old soul ! fancy's fictions lend her eloquence, and not, as but too often now-a-days, scandal's biting tongue. And here, when evening comes, comes many an idle loiterer, " from labour free," to sit under that aged tree, so many its years that he who had numbered near a hundred seasons—the Patriarch of Oakfield—remembered, when yet a stripling boy, how he had sought its shelter and its shade, after the heat and toil of rustic festival and dance,—how, after the broad round moon had risen from out the waters of yonder blue sea, her beams would fall upon the taper spire of the village church, and warn them that the hour was fast coming when forms, white and tall like it, might rise from out its wood-screened

churchyard, and walk the earth to scare the midnight idler.

Yes, old John was wont to tell, “ that when the moonlight came silvering upon that spire, they used to say it looked like a ghost rising from out the dark shades around it. And then we used to hie us home.” And he could tell of the village inn, which stood, neat and clean, in the little street-way, with its white post, and chains, and swinging sign of a large round oak, how it had opened to receive the merry-making of Christmas, and May too, in all her pride of Maid Marianne and Robin Hood, and the wild murmuring frolic, trick, and witchery, of Holy eve.

Where are they now, and those feats of activity, bowling, quoits, reelpins, and the hundred good old games? — now lost and gone.

The good old man who could tell of all these wonders was now seated beneath the aged oak on this very May morning, and he was great

grandsire to that same Annee whom first we met with her lover in Oakfield village churchyard. A word he had for each as they passed along, and kindly he declined the proffered offers to lead him to Oakfield Park.

“ My Annee will be here anon ; she would be over-jealous did her old grandsire borrow any other staff but his young May-queen to support his slow step, — my child will soon be here,” and soon she was by his side.

“ Ah, my young May-queen, your bonny gear makes these old eyes love to look upon you,—why, Flora’s self is not more sweet,—thy coronal, Annee, grew not beneath our changing sky. Tender care has watched these flowers for thee, child.”

“ Yes, grandsire, sweet Dora Lucy sent them to me.”

“ Yes, yes; Dora Lucy is one of her generation; its stream has always run from pure old fountains,—nothing like it. He whose return we go to-day to celebrate was her, yet older, grandsire,

than I am ; blessings be to him in heaven who leaves to earth such branches as this—sweet Dora Lucy ; yes, such good old blood,—such true right hearts,—still tells us what England was once, but what she will never be again. We may mend now-a-days, but we shall never see such good old things as we were wont to have. But come, my prattle must not make me lag, or they will say, Fred Stanley, my steps will not last to take me to thy bridal, boy.”

It is for a painter’s pencil to give life to the group, the pen may not, as on they passed, the aged grandsire and his lovely Annee, up the village street, where “devotion gives each house a bough.” ’Twas as if the past had come back, guided by love and hope, to all the sweet and delicious of life.

On they pass, till they reach the place of meeting—it is at the village Maypole, which generation on generation had seen looking down upon the place. It was now garlanded with wreaths of gold and silver, purple and

rosy hues—what a fairy group are round it of young and blushing life! It was a pretty pageant; each fair village girl crowned with a coronal of flowers, half hid beneath snowy veils; their white dresses decorated with wreaths, each carrying a tiny rod ornamented with a ring, formed of the blossoming May, and a small blue flag inscribed with “Welcome.”

Annee was elected May-queen of the day; but she was not asked to resign her post beside her grandsire—and good John Owen, led by lovely Annee, bore their steps to Oakfield Park.

That aged man, with his long silver hair, his old fashioned costume, his tall erect form, with step and countenance time seemed to have forgotten to trace its character on—for the step was firm far beyond his years, the countenance expressive yet, with quick thought and kindly benevolence.

First went the rustic band; then followed each, two and two, up the path of the church

lane, rich with primrose, violet, and sweet May; an arcade of green branching trees thrown across made soft light, as onward trod those laughing ones; and the gay harmony of music, pealing bell, gleesome voice, came floating wildly, joyfully, on the scented breeze; then in the rear followed the more humble villagers, young and old, in Sunday attire.

They reach the gates of the park; here a new scene breaks out—awnings supported by pillars decorated with flowers; beneath are spread tables covered with plenty and luxury; while far off, beneath the shade of the fine old oaks, are seen others groaning with more substantial and less delicate viands for more homely guests,—but are these less partially greeted by Mr. Lucy and his bright joyous family?

It was a good sight that group—the father and grandfather in one, with all the stamp of his high aristocratic bearing, yet so wholly untainted by the bitterness of pride. Then his daughter, Dora Lucy, a very joy to every eye;

hers was the wild bright loveliness of gipsy charms—the raven eye and hair—the clear brown skin through which the eloquent blood spoke,—true it was, Dora Lucy was a dark beauty, but what so brilliant in its full radiance as night? Then, when her soul spoke out, it was seen in eye, lip, and cheek; with heart open as day to kindness, she never past her footsteps from out her father's threshold that a blessing did not fall upon their track. Anne Owen she had loved from her earliest knowledge of her, though station in life had raised the one many grades above the other. Dora was the first to step forward from the family group, as they stood upon the terrace which girted the old fashioned pile of Oakfield Park, with its gables, high chimneys, and heavy stone-work windows. It was a place of the olden times, with its fish-ponds, waterworks, grotesque yew-clipped deformities, grass walks, holly hedges, and trim gardens, even its hospitality,—all poured out the heart greetings of days gone by.

Dora stepped forward, as I said, to welcome her friend Annee queen of the day ; and well she looked a queen, for Dora had culled the choicest flowers of the conservatory to form her coronal.

Annee was led out by Mr. Lucy's eldest son, and the music striking up, they commenced the dance ; but why did Annee's eye wander restlessly ? Though courted, flattered, and admired, still she seemed to move heartlessly on—and there was mirth and merriment to gladden the saddest ; even the aged seemed to grow young, as they sat chatting and basking in the sunshine, with all their rising generation branching around them. Annee Owen having finished her dance, seated herself between her grandsire and Stanley's uncle.

“ Fine day, fine day, Miss Annee,” said old Peter Stanley, rubbing his hands—“ How be you, how be you ?”

“ Well, thank you, Peter Stanley,” and she extended her pretty hand to the old gentleman.



What Peter's age might be, it would have been difficult to define, for the face was as it were one of stone, so dingy and motionless—the eye, small, was set far into the socket—the brow heavy, pent, and shaggy—the forehead, bald and projected, was broad, flat, and ample, but untraced by openness or intellect—the nose thick, hooked, and marked—the mouth revealed more of the characteristic trait of Peter Stanley than any other feature; it was thin, close pressed, and indented; while the curved chin formed a face of strongly marked outline, but one without a shadow, either in expression or contour, of anything pleasing or prepossessing—it was cold, dead, stupid; its variation seemed a mere muscular or galvanized motion; and yet it was a face when once seen was never forgotten. Peter was something about the middle size, but broad, slouching, and clumsily built; the neck short and thick; but still, as I said, Peter Stanley once seen was never forgotten—the manner, formation of figure, and head,

remained fixed on the memory—a child's pencil might have traced his portrait with living accuracy, it was one so peculiar, and yet it would have given no insight into the character of the man. His dress was slovenly, dirty, and unmarked by date, yet out of all date—the threadbare brown coat might have been the tailoring of this or any other century—the breeches, fastened at the knees with long strings, hung loosely and baglike about him; to-day he wore black silk stockings and shoe-buckles, and a less ancient stock round his throat; altogether, Peter, both in act and picturing, bore the stamp of a character,—but it was difficult from the outward to trace the inward man—this could not have originated in his not having strong unquenchable peculiarities. Peter was a miser!—frightfully so; the love of gold—for gold itself was a very plague-spot on his soul—the molten god of his waking and sleeping dreams, absorbing every feeling, thought, and propensity—a sort of volcano flame, bursting forth to

desolate every object of this world, and render the next a fearful hope;—it silenced every feeling of compassion, subdued every other passion of the soul, and turned to gall every affection of nature. This love of gold—it is a hideous thing, and perhaps, when once finding root in the mind of man, grows with greater strength than any corruption that springs up there; but Peter's seemed to have been an heritage; the father, like the son, had been a miser, and left the toils and hoards to Peter, disinheriting Frederic Stanley's father for making an imprudent marriage. Still, though he had left Peter in possession of countless riches, the father had no sooner breathed his last than Peter was determined his parent's lessons should not be lost on him.

His father happening to breathe his last some miles from his native town of D——, Peter, though ever acting as if he had no soul, had still a strange pharisaical religion, and a weak superstition mixed up in his composition. He

was never missed from his pew, save on charitable occasions, weekdays, and Sundays, and responded loudly and attentively.

His parent on his death-bed requested he might be buried in the family vault at Oakfield, for, with all their meanness, family pride was strongly evinced both in father and son, and, doubtless, they boasted a line of good old ancestors who had all been laid in this old vault; therefore Peter's parent must repose beside them. The removing a corpse was an expensive thing. What was to be done? The medical attendant who had come from Oakfield to attend Peter's father in his last moments had a carriage with him; now could not the dead father find room between the son and doctor; and most urgent was Peter.

"Now doey, now doey, doctor; he ha'n't been dead three hours; doey, doctor, no one will know on it."

But the doctor was as dead to the miser's prayer as the miser was to the voice of natural

affection, therefore Peter was under the necessity of hiring a chaise, into which was conveyed the stiff corpse of his parent, and placed up beside him, attired as a living father. Thus Peter returned to his native town of D——. Was not this a being over whom the curse of the love of gold had poured its consuming fire; whose mind, like the Gomorrah of old, had nothing of life or beauty existing in it;—all was sterile and desolate—poorer than the poorest—in the possession of thousands, nay, millions.

It was a frightful contemplation;—that same old miser, now going on in years to his last reckoning, yet overlooking that final one in the sordid one of the present. Young Stanley was almost wholly dependent upon this uncle, and was allowed to occupy a place in his counting-house. Peter, nominally, was a wine-merchant, but he trafficked in all and everything from which he could extract a shilling profit, from a pennyworth of pins to a pipe of wine.

Frederic Stanley's father had been much in-

volved, and died young, though not before he had given his son the advantages of the best education, intending to put him into the church. His widow was left nearly unprovided ; young Stanley was therefore glad to accept his uncle's offer of receiving him into his countinghouse in order to support his mother, as, though the salary was but a slender one, his uncle held out promises of making him his heir, which made the many peculiarities of Peter Stanley be overlooked, both by Frederic and his mother, the one for the sake of her son, the other for his mother's and Annie's. As long as Frederic did not ask his uncle to further with his money the union of Annie and himself, Peter talked over it as a very pleasant thing, to take place some day or other. "Very fond, very, of the girl ; nice sort of girl enough—nice girl—mighty nice girl."

And Annie, for the sake of Stanley, was always attentive, bringing him little presents of what she was aware he was fond, for no one

enjoyed or loved the good things of this world better than Peter, when procured at his friend's expense. Such was Peter Stanley, beside whom Annee was now seated.

"Where is Frederic, my child?" asked John Owen.

"I do not know," she replied, in a voice that ill concealed the emotion that was trembling within her breast.

"Not know, my maid! why is he not here to foot it with his bonny queen? Ah! yonder he is coming."

Kate Marlow was on his arm; she was smiling with all her own pretty gentle simplicity, as he bent down to talk with her.

"Kate is here! I thought such fangles as these to-day never lured maidens like her. Is she not over sober to be mixing in the merry-making of such Maying as this?"

"So I thought, grandsire," said Annee, and her lip curled, and was as pale as her cheek.

"Humph!" said old Owen; "I don't love

these new fashioned lanterns, flinging light only on our own steps; I like the charity that benefits our neighbours as well as ourselves as we walk along the dingy ways of this troubled world. Kate Marlow is over bright in her own eyes; she leaves nothing but the dark side for others; she is geared out more than is her wont to-day," added Owen, as Kate and Stanley approached them.

Kate, it is true, was attired like her other young friends, save that not a shade of colour was visible but the green leaves in her coronal of May; even the ring of her wand was composed of the same. Yes, there was one other flower—it was the violet's deep purple; a bunch was seen reposing on the snowy kerchief that veiled a bosom fair as it was pure.

It was not the first time Annee's eye had rested on them, for she had seen Stanley present them; and had they been poisoned flowers, they could not have been more deadly to Annee's eye, as she looked again at them.



Kate, too, looked so feminine—so modest—a very image of innocence and simplicity. Her soft sweet eye, blue as heaven's own dye; the forehead so unruffled, and the sunny hair parting in braids without study or effort across it; and then she was so collected, so calm, yet so little absorbed. She wore strange contrast to the wild excited manner of Annee, as she said to her, "Dear Annee, Frederic and I have been so seeking for you."

"Indeed!"—and a withering look met the placid glance of her friend.

"Yes, Annee, and do come with us, they are going into the tents to dinner; take my arm, do, Annee, dear Annee," and Frederic placed himself beside her as her grandsire vacated his seat.

"I want not your services," Frederic Stanley; Mr. Lucy comes to take me," and Annee rose to meet his approach.

Though Annee laughed and talked even with unwonted gaiety, yet a near observer might

have seen that restless eye turning to one point when she deemed herself unseen—it was where Kate Marlow and Frederic Stanley were seated. They appeared chatting and enjoying each other's society most happily. In truth, Stanley had been so piqued by Annee's manner of receiving his proffered attentions that he determined to shew his indifference by devoting himself to Kate, though the very moments in which they appeared most attentive to each other were those in which Annee was the subject of conversation; both regretted her determined jealousy.

Kate, like Annee, had been Frederic's companion from childhood; though towards Kate Marlow he felt all a brother's affection and kindness, nothing more had ever arisen within him, as from his earliest recollection Annee had been his affianced one. If more had ever been felt on her part, it ran like one of those streams which steal beneath the shade of some cavern's depth where light hath never

looked, silent, and secret in its hidden course. If it was love, it was pure as a sister's love, and the altar on which it burned was called by friendship's name alone; in word and thought, in a sobered and apparently passionless being such as Kate Marlow, perhaps none could ever have discovered more, even had it existed. She received Frederic's attentions; nay, she may have slightly sought them, not from the wish to vex or rival Annee, for she loved her, dearly loved her; but she was not blind to her errors, nor was Kate ever influenced by the opinions of others, even though she loved them. She never did anything, to the most minute action of every day, but under the conviction of doing what she deemed right and fitting; she thought it unjust of Annee to suspect, and she never allowed her injustice or suspicions to operate upon her actions. Kate, doubtless, sometimes erred in her code, for she had a little, very little, of the fanatic in her disposition; had it been stronger, it would have rendered her cold-

hearted and harsh; through the love of doing too much, she would have fallen off in performing too little,—that is, she would have despised and triumphed over those errors and failings in others it should have been her benevolence to pardon, her desire to cure. Kate seldom felt harshly; she sometimes spoke unkindly; but to none was Kate severe, save to herself.

The close of the evening of the festive day was fast drawing on; each group, as they had danced or talked themselves into fatigue, stole away. In the games gradually was shewn less exertion and emulation; the laugh was less loud and long; the cup remained unpledged; the dancers sat them down beneath the shady branchings, beside their favourite partners; the flowery coronals were fading fast on the fair villagers' brows; weary childhood had played itself to sleep, and lay in slumber in the parent's arms, or on the velvet sward; the music gave not out such merry notes, but breathed in strains softened and mellowed as the atmos-

phere through which it floated; the crescent moon and one glittering star came out and looked upon the fading hushing scene of this jocund day.

It was not yet as when age has past over existence, but it was as when time has thrown a veil around the young radiance of first hopes and pleasures, whose transparency does not conceal, though it shades, the things that are. The tints that fall in early dawn, how often are their hues sembled by the twilight of eve. Youth and age may be alike in this. Youth has a fearful world of sunshine before it—age a world of dreaded shadows; in both, the things to be can be but the hopes and fears unrealized. There was something soothing in watching the day's decline sinking calmly into peace. Nature and man looked in sympathy—and it is seldom thus. Nature is like a soulless beauty. We may sympathize with nature—nature sympathizes not with us, for the sun hides not himself in clouds because tears dim our sight.

Annee sat listlessly watching the scene. Indeed, I doubt whether she marked its change ; —her mind remained uncalmed by its contemplation. She had retired into the shade of one of the deep arcades which branched off from the open space of the pleasure ground, and formed an aisle of gothic gloom, delicious in its holy stillness. She was just far enough in the back-ground to be screened from observation, yet sufficiently in view to be able to observe every object of busy life on the green extent before her. Distance lent to the music's note an ethereal tone as it floated towards her ;—to her it seemed coming from the spheres of those favourite children of her wild imagination — the inhabitants of Fairy land—to Annee scarce the beings of fable. Idle dreams they were ; still they created around her beautiful things, and seemed as if “ bright seraphs mixed familiarly with her, and earth and stars composed a universal heaven.” The fleecy clouds she peopled with aerial spirits—

there they dwelt in mansions of silver; light melodious strains floated around, and there they were “lulled in flowers with dance and delight.”

Poor Annee! thou wert one of Nature’s wildest but purest children; a creature of fantasies and superstitions; of quick impulses; a lonely bark on a sea of varying tides, but without a rudder.

At this moment she saw Frederic approaching her; she felt conscious she was wronging him by her idle jealousy, yet she could not overcome herself; she hastily arose and endeavoured to pass from him, but her lover’s step was quicker than her own. “Annee,” he said, “wait for one moment; hear me.”

“No, Frederic Stanley, no! my heart is breaking. Let it break—who will weep over the grave of Annee Owen; she stands to darken the light of others’ footsteps—she cannot shine out now, and call into life sweet and lovely things, as once, by her faintest glance,—

No, no! I am a doomed one, Madge Freeman said it oft;—'tis vain, 'tis vain to tell me other." She continued, as her lover essayed to speak—"No! tell me not that her dark spirit has no part in knowledge with those to whom power is given to dive into the deep, deep things that are to be—ay, it was but yestereve her voice sounded in mine ear as I knelt beside my father's tomb. Yes, she told me strange, wild things; she told me soon that another grave should be beside that father's—that child and parent should be united, but *fearfully* united."

Annee looked up at her lover; her eye was dimmed with tears, and she trembled when she laid her hand on his arm.

"Annee, dearest! best beloved! heed not Madge; we are in the hands of Him who willeth not that such as Madge should unloose the sealed books of fate; the spirit breathing within thy lover's heart is a surer prophet—and as it worships thee, has worshipped since eye has known how to gaze, since tongue has learnt



utterance—that spirit, my own, tells me thou wilt live to be mine. Annee, such love as I bear thee I feel in every pulse—no, it cannot be infused into my very existence, merely to know a brief life. It must be immortal. Listen to me; here, on bended knee, let me swear it to thee—turn, turn not from my adoration. Well! well! if thou wilt not let me press this plighted hand to fond, loving lips, they e’en shall touch the sod where thy foot hath left its print. And thou wilt not listen, thou wilt not look on me!” cried Stanley, as he still, on bended knee, gazed on the half-arrested form of the blushing, trembling, but self-willed girl. “And you will not!—only one look, one kind word! Oh! Anne! have you no heart?”

“No, no, none, Frederic; it is broken.”

Tears and sobs choked her utterance. Stanley was by her side; his arm circled her waist. “And why, why is it broken?”

“Why, Stanley, because you love me not; you know it not, but you love Kate Marlow.

To-day—to-day has confirmed it, has burnt the conviction into my very heart's core. Honour, pity, is all you can give me."

"Love Kate Marlow, Annee! To tell what my passion is for thee I have no words,—I have no images. What! when your touch, your voice, your very breath, seems heaven to my whole frame;—an ecstasy, a trembling joy, such as I cannot tell thee, best beloved. I can only ask thee if thou knowest what it is to love.—Yes, yes, I will, I must, kiss those idle tears away. Look, look on me."

"You do love me, Frederic." And those beaming eyes were raised to his; that fairy form was encircled in her lover's arms.

"Love you—how shall I swear it to thee?" Another voice broke suddenly on their ears. "Swear! Swear it not to the air, it is polluted by man's breath—swear it not to the moon, it changes—nor to the sun, clouds are over it erst night darkens it—nor let the winds carry it on their wings, they visit hidden, dark, and secret

places—nor to the floods, no, not to the floods, fearful things are they—they wrap young life in their angry embrace, they carry down the loving form into concealed caverns of frightful form! Ha! ha!” and the speaker laughed wildly. “Thou wouldst not like to go into those green dwellings—thou wouldst not like to hear the rushing, the wild, wild roar of all beneath, and look up and see through the clear element the thing of thy dotage, all bright and living above; see the lips of love prest to other lips than thine own;—then deceive not the listeners, lest they revenge the wrong; ‘oaths are ever false,’—the sacred altar of the holy sanctuary sees false oaths plighted at her very footsteps. I tell thee, Frederic Stanley, the miser’s curse is on thee if thou wed her. Annee Owen, a spell shall lead thee from his threshold,—the miser’s gold shall never be thine; perchance it shall fall to the lot of one who shall seek peace but find it not.”

This was uttered with strange and impressive

power by the same Madge Annee had just alluded to, and who had as suddenly appeared as she now disappeared down the dim moonlit arcade, her tall, graceful figure and gesture giving full force to her mystical prophecy.

“Tremble not, dearest,” said the soothing but agitated voice of Stanley; “we know Madge is but a mad bewildered visionary; there cannot be, there is not, truth in what she says.”

“You said not so always, Frederic; but I will not grieve you more; I will smile, I will laugh even at Madge,” and faintly and strangely she did laugh, as she and her lover bent their homeward steps. Gradually died away the hum of the loitering revellers who yet remained at Oakfield Park; and when midnight came, nought save the stars of heaven were waking over the lovely village; all was still as the grave. It seemed as if this evening had restored Annee and Frederic to each other; and they were blest as they strolled along the lanes or lingered on the sequestered stile; blest they

were, so wildly drawn from all of common ; no companions, save nature and their own hearts. Sometimes might they be seen on the plank bridge thrown athwart a chasm of the glen ; how they loitered on its dizzy height to hearken to the music-torrent beneath ! again, book in hand, Stanley would read aloud some fairy legend to his rapt listener, and this in bowers, fit homes for sylvan elves—bowers, of which nature's self had woven the tracery, rich with flowery boughs of clematis, and the rosy blush of the wild rose, glittering with golden bloom, and pale laburnum, woodbine, violet, and primrose ; and green their velvet couch. Were they not blest ? Was not the atmosphere of love on all within, without ? its spirit was written on all ; on all eye rested, on all ear drank in, from the birds that sang in the blue fresh air to the enamelled carpet on which they trod. And thus they spoke :

“ Why should we delay our bridal longer, love ; my uncle will never part with his hordes ; every day only increases his regard for them,—

and what do we want of luxury? Is not this enough of luxury? What can earth or heaven give us more than love;—love, that which heaven itself is composed of; 'tis only in love perfection is found. All is quite, quite perfect, when it wraps us in its deliciousness. Art thou not happy?" asked the fond lover; and blissful was the ignorance that dreamed itself so.

"But, Frederic——," said Annee.

"But!" he replied; "dearest, thou wilt not answer me with but—will you, at such a moment, when not a doubt is with me?"

"Yes, indeed, I must,—not because I would not joyfully say the other. My mother has few comforts, few indeed, and would her child lessen one of them? You know I have no fortune independent of her; we must not think of it yet, Frederick."

"Yes, we must; I will again try what I can do with my uncle; and besides,—are you not afraid to trust me?—Kate Marlow is an heiress." And Stanley looked up smiling into Annee's face. She tried to smile too; but there was ever

something dangerous even in badinage, to allude to Kate. With Annee it was one of those unconquerable feelings which, when once imbibed, can never be wholly eradicated, however reason and judgment may exert themselves to prove its fallacy.

A lingering farewell did these young lovers take as they passed through the churchyard, and loitered at the wicker gate of Owen cottage.

It was eventide; repose and idleness lay impressed on all around. The swardy graves looked green and fresh; the spiral steeple caught the expiring light, which still floated round the setting sun; the grasshopper chirped; the cuckoo gave out his note from far; the labourer was lolling on the bench before his cottage home, with children at his knee; the busy housewife, work in hand, sat beneath the woodbine porch, and gossiped with each passer-by; the village musician, seated on some neighbouring stile, with his flute, gave sweetly out the wild note on the evening gale;—the scene was



full of life, but life calmed, peaceful as the mind entranced with the visions of hope.

“ ’Tis an evening,” said Annee, “ one could wish would never end; the air is fragrant with odour; the perfume of flowers to me seems what memory of sweet things are, the extract from beauty; that memory would ever be thus laden! but it is all too beautiful—it cannot last.” There was something witchingly lovely in the voice and eye of the pensive girl as she spoke, still leaning on her lover’s arm, as he lingeringly held the little gate half open.

“ Then stay thee yet a brief space—create yet for recollection new moments of delicious excitement—moments so exquisite, so fraught with passionate adoration, that their very strength renders them almost painful in their excess; let us down the church lane to the village green and see if thy grandsire is not there—you have not seen him to-day;—will you, love?”

“ Not now, dear Frederic; see, yonder my mother waits me.”



“ And must you go ? ”

“ Yes ; for you must not ask me to stay ; your uncle will want you . ”

“ How long is it to be thus that we must say farewell ? ” said Stanley, as he pressed her hand fondly in his.

“ Farewell ! farewell ! dear Frederic ! ” and the bright smiling girl turned again and gave her last adieus, as her lover stood watching her retreating footsteps up the little green lawn of her home.

“ Good night, sweet love, ” he said, and she vanished from his eye, and he passed on to a far different dwelling. It was to his uncle’s, in the town of D——, a mile from the village of Oakfield.

Strange contrast this work-a-day character of life with that which feelings and romance creates. Passing from one to the other may be what we imagine must have fallen over the mind of the first erring one, when going out of the cherub-guarded Eden into the blighted wilderness of his future dwelling place.

His uncle's home looked more dusky and dim than was even its wont, though at all times it wore the aspect of a building over which time and decay seemed tired of working their traces ; they had done all they could do and leave it habitable ; it stood in one of the principal streets of D——, and rose high in two pointed roofs ; its front, brown and smoky, interlaced with broad painted wood crossings ; the second story projected far over the shop windows, and its pent overhanging seemed almost ready to crumble on the passenger's head, while its long, dim, uncleaned, and small paned lattice windows made darkness visible within. Take it as it stood, it bore the aspect of a miser's den of want and misery.

Old Stanley was on the steps of his shop door in chat with a ragged boy who had just picked up a penny, to which Peter laid claim, and which, in fact, for a bet, had been dropped where the boy had found it, and who was commissioned to make trial of Peter's principles, by asking him if the coin was his ; but it proved in favour of him who betted on Peter's love of gain ;

for he held the piece in his hand, and coaxingly praised the boy with, “ You be a mighty honest lad ; eess, eess, that you be ; just dropt it—just dropt it ; always mind and be an honest boy ”—and patting the boy on the head, he retired into the shop with his nephew, first securing the piece of copper in his breeches’ pocket. Old Stanley was too busy all the remainder of the evening with his ledgers for Frederic to open on the subject of Annee and himself ; but he determined, on the following morning, to seek him in his accustomed early walks, which were generally along a tram-road ;—and here, most mornings, was the miser to be found, with an old soiled blue handkerchief in the form of a bundle slung on his arm, containing the tiny atoms of coal which accident had let fall from the carts as they had passed along.

“ Here I am, Fred ; nice coal, nice coal—cook the dinner—all helps—cook the dinner—better than let the tram-wheels go over it—waste not, want not, eh, Fred—mighty nice coal ; but, Fred, done a good thing this morning—nice morning, nice morning ”—and a

sort of muscular movement was visible on his stone-like face, and more eagerness in his quick abrupt voice and expressions; for Peter ever seemed afraid he should lose something by allowing his ideas too many words in their disclosure.

“Early bird catch the worm!—You be a mighty fine young man, that you be—but—but—I say, Fred—early bird catch the worm!—Look, look—done a good thing—early bird catch the worm—eess, eess—”

And Peter shewed Stanley a five pound note of a neighbouring bank.

“Met a traveller—Eess, eess—a drover man—mighty good sort of a drover—in a hurry to get along—wanted change. ‘Ay, ay,’ I said, ‘what will you give me, Master Drover, if I change it?’ ‘Nothing, nothing.’ Eess, eess—likely that, eh, Fred—likely, eh, Fred—Early bird catch the—— ‘Well, a shilling.’ ‘Eess, eess, a shilling—you be a mighty clever—that you be, Master Drover; here be four pounds fifteen shillings, and I be willing

to take the note—"Eess, eess.'" And chuckling over and over again, Peter put the money carefully into his note book.

"Clever, that, Fred; clever, Fred."

"Certainly, Sir," and Frederic Stanley thought a better opportunity could not offer to touch on the subject of his marriage.

"True, true; a nice, a mighty nice girl—but hard, hard times, Fred.—Taxes, taxes heavy—nice girl, but hard times—hard times. Taxes, taxes, Fred."

"But with such thousands at your command, uncle; our wishes are so moderate; and I will devote all my time and exertions to business."

"Eess, eess, Fred, I know you are a good boy, but——" and he went on stammering and stuttering in a manner so tantalizing to poor Stanley's feelings at that moment; for he had flattered himself that he had made some progress towards gaining his purpose.

"Eess, eess.—But let me tell you a story,

Fred—near being married myself once—a nice sort of a girl—a milliner sort of girl.” Ah ! thought Stanley, I wish the milliner girl was at the d—— at present.

“ Eess, eess—a milliner sort of girl—got out of it though, eh, Fred—good thing, as poor father said, for she married afterwards—had ten children—twins the first year!—Eh, eh, Fred, bad, bad thing.—What should I have done, poor man like me—ten children—ten—Eess, eess, Fred, I be a poor man.—Father always bid me not spend. ‘ Don’t, don’t spend, Peter,’ he said, ‘ like Tom Alley.’ Colonel Tom Alley—you know about Tom Alley—he be a great man, Fred, now, with his company, and his horses, and his carriage—but he be over fond of making game—he be over proud—and I b<sup>h</sup>ant at all proud, be I, Fred ?”

“ No, no, indeed, Sir;”—would to heaven you were more so, thought Stanley to himself.

“ Eess, eess, you know Tom Alley—he be proud. Now he was once a-gibing and a-going

on ; so I said, eess, eess, I will pay you off with interest, Master Tom. It was a grand company like, and no one knew about Tom's father—he kept a hosier's shop. And so I said, ‘Colonel Alley, you be a mighty nice sort of a gentleman, that you be, and a mighty nice boy you were when you sold them stockings behind your father's counter. Many a warm pair, Master Tom, I have bought from ye. I always said you would be a mighty clever gentleman—eess, eess, that I did.’ Tom did not like it—did not like it, eh, eh, Fred ?”

“No, I should think not, Sir.” And they had now arrived at Peter's house. He soon finished his frugal breakfast, and, putting his hands behind his back, walked away into the shop, and his nephew was left to contemplate the brown grate, and its stuffing of dirty paper—the darned threadbare rug, and the old china ornaments, filled with faded dusty everlastings. It was a homely, dingy apartment, looking on the roofs of houses and their black chimneys.

In front was a small paved yard, with tubs, and a worn-out mop, all dimly visible through a faded green canvass blind, strained over a painted frame. The room contained a few old-fashioned high-backed arm-chairs, with mended chintz covers; an unpolished dining-table, with small legs; an ancient sideboard, adorned with two knifecases, filled with antique silver-handled knives and forks, somewhat pewter-like for want of chamois and plate powder. A miserable square piece of carpet covered the centre of the room, on which was placed Peter's little round one-legged breakfast-table, spread with the breakfast equipage of the man of four millions. Such beings are men—that nothing but the reality seems to contradict impossibility, and give fabling existence.

A blue cup and saucer, a tin tray, black teapot and milk-jug, a basin of *yellow* white sugar, a small coarse loaf of bread, and a couple of ounces of butter, constituted the paraphernalia, and which, for many minutes after his



uncle left the room, seemed to be the only objects which met the young man's contemplation; but it is to be questioned if he saw one article there.

"No, no, it is of no avail," at last said Stanley, between his closed teeth.

"La! bless ye, never take on; I'll get you a bit of breakfast," said old Molly, Peter's housekeeper, who entered to remove this cortège.

"Thank you, Molly, I breakfasted before I left my mother's," said Stanley, at last roused from his deep reverie.

"So you want to get married, Master Stanley, but he wont give you anything, I be bound; but why be ye so squeamish like?" said she, coming up close to him. "Why not take and put together as others do. Many's the one that plucks the live goose, and do they fly a bit the worse for it arter. It'll grow again,—it'll fledge as thick as ever; and whose the wiser after you have stuffed your bed and made it easy. I'll tell you a secret, Fred Stanley, and I have nursed you on this

old knee, when it was younger than it is now, and sure I can tell what's in your heart. Pluck, I say, as Tom and Phill do, and who's the wiser where they get the match to light their candle with. Tut, tut, I say, it's all your own arter all, that's to a moral nicety. He beant as sharp as you take him for, nor as sharp neither as he takes himself for; and while he be looking for a farthing, he is dropping a guinea for others to catch at. Ay, ay, Master Fred, it wont always do. 'Put a rogue to catch a rogue;' the foxes to their cost finds there are cunninger things than themselves in the world."

"This is bad advice, Molly, from one who nursed me."

"Ay, so it may be; but they thieve; you would only borrow; and did not the people of the Lord do it afore, as I heard the minister tell. And there be Phill, for certain, has £20,000, all out at interest, and when he came here he had not a rag, as one might say, to cover his naked-

ness ; but he has plenty now to hide himself in."

" How can you tell that, Molly !—if the fact, why not put my uncle on his guard ?"

" You may as well not do it ; what's the value of that to him who has four millions of gold ; and I tell you, you may as well not, for our master is one that thinks himself too knowing to be cheated, and so would not like to find out the truth to his own lowering. Never heed it, never heed it ; he is rich enough for Tom and Phill, and you too."

" But you surprise me, Molly, to hear my uncle is robbed, of all people."

" Perhaps I do ; but think you I have lived upwards of forty years under this very roof, and not know more about Peter Stanley than I have time to tell you ; he was not always so shut up but that something besides gold found its way into his heart, though that has never been out of it."

" We can scarcely credit so now, Molly."

“ Yet Madge Freeman could tell you other.”

“ Why, Molly, you are beside yourself this morning ; you are wandering like Madge herself. —Uncle does not even know Madge ; or, if he does, it is only as a crazed creature.”

“ Ay, ay, but he is coming,” and Molly huddled the breakfast things away.

“ Ah ! ah ! master,” said his shopman, Phill, following him into the room — “ Early bird catch the worm—your note is not worth a two-penny piece. Why the knowing drover drove you harder than his cattle—he has taken you for an old fool,” for Phill was on somewhat familiar terms with his master.

“ Eh, eh—what, what ?” said Peter, somewhat moved.

“ Eh, eh — what, what !” repeated Phill ; “ why that there bank has been broke this six months agone.”

“ What, what—broke, broke—how do you know—how do you know, Phill ? — What, what ?”

“ Ah ! ah ! Master Peter—early bird catch the worm and is sometimes caught in the trap himself, Master—eh, eh.”

“ What, what?”—and Master Stanley put on his rusty hat, and hobbled quick out with his hands behind him, looking like a great dirty bag, to ascertain the truth of Phill’s intelligence, and poor Frederick, with still baffled hopes, retired to his desk.

We will now return to Annee, but we shall not find her leaning on her lover’s arm. No, she is at the dwelling-place of Madge Freeman, and many months are past over since we left her at her cottage home, with looks bright and loving. The trees now are dark and shadeless—the torrent is full and brawling, and the sun looks coyly down on its noise and anger. That same stream, where we saw Annee and Frederic standing above on the plank bridge, bears its swift way beside the lonely dwelling of Madge, which stands deep in the glen, amidst gloom and shadow, and few take their path that way.

Mystery had enveloped everything connected with Madge; superstition had veiled her, and lent interest and awe to her power. How she lived and was supported no one knew, nor could guess from whence she came. She was acquainted with every one's movements, nay, dived into the recesses of many of the hidden secrets of those who visited her. Some said she was connected with those prophet people the gipsies, yet none were known to visit her. Others looked on her with horror and trembling, and deemed her spells were drawn from still deeper and darker spirits than heaven sees beneath her sunshine—that she held league with the evil denizens of accursed places. Yet Madge wronged no one, and honestly paid her way. She accepted no bribe from the anxious doubting lovers when she would consent to open their book of fate; but in doing this she was fickle and uncertain; but with the spell and charmed antidote for the sick and dying she was ever ready and generous. Both in revela-

tion and power Madge was said to work marvels, and many a village lass has past down the glen from Madge's abode when she has bid her trust—with heart light as the warbler which carolled above her head,—and yet, not less overshadowed and drear is twilight, saddened with the note of the lone bird of night, than the dread infused by her predictions of darkness, to which none could give greater force in her wild incoherent burst than Madge Freeman.

Until Madge had come to dwell in her present abode, her home had been amidst a place of superstition and desolation—where “once stood altars and groves by the green trees upon the high hills,” which had witnessed accursed rites—where still every stream and every moss-grown stone told of dire and appalling creeds, of mysterious times—times over which has tided century after century, with all their changes of customs, religions, and laws.

Hoary monuments, historic records of that which has been, are here seen, — and shew

the hideousness of the spirit of that religion which drew not its essence from on high—sublimity, in all its frightfulness, haunts still the loneliness of Dartmoor; and here it was that the once lovely Catherine, now Madge Freeman, grew into womanhood, and became a wanderer and a bewildered outcast. When storm swept over the wild moor—groaned amidst the wooded heights—what an impressive picture was here; when doubtful shadows fell on the dim granite forms which were strewn around, like “fragments of an earlier world;” or when the moon shrouded her silver mantle around Ton and Cromlech, standing forth like ghostly spectres in their winding-sheets; when thunder echoed through the cavern’s gloom, and gave an earthquake’s trembling to its cannon voice; when lightnings flashed and glared to give darkness more strength in its hideousness, there on those spots where incense flame had burnt more unholy than that on Baal altars, was seen the fearless Catherine—she trembled not amidst Mist-



man's woods or Bairdown heights. What heeded she the gusty winds, as they swept through the gnarled and fantastic oak grove, making melancholy music, as if the bards, with their harps of old, were still haunting their hoary shades; and dear to her ear was the dashing of the angry Dart, as it wended its tossing way through the valley below—here in this superstitious desolation her imagination's fevered excitement found revelling. Though her lot was cast amidst outcasts and branded felons, her mind had never descended to hold communion or fellowship with them; she lived a life of dreams; and when visionary fancy created aerial things, and enveloped the reality of past times with frightful forms, still woman's weakness never started at the appalling images. The ancient architectural forms of cairns, cromlechs, tons, logans, and rocking stones, which were strewn in gigantic masses around the concealed dwelling of Catherine, assumed a character which Nature nowhere else reveals, and gave to the remotest past a living picture.

To Catherine, young, wild, passionate, the desolate region became peopled, as of old, with Druidical and Baal like forms; at the powers of priestcraft and divination she started not—their phantoms were as companionship—she held with them unearthly communion; the torrent's roar, the groaning blast that rushed through the hoary temples of Druidical worship, the aged oak, and their god of idolatry—the mistletoe still blooming green as of yore, amidst Christmas snow, had charms for her. Catherine loved all this wildness as if "it had blossomed as the rose." And often at the dead hour of night might be seen this singular being watching her husband's return, standing beneath the shadow of these granite giants, or seated on the mossy tuft of some levelled trunk—here, with no light but the clouded moon, no sound but the screech-owl's ominous note, would she wait.

Her tale is simply told—though not what its circumstances traced on her mind,—thoughts of no common kind were there. If Catherine worked her strange spells over others, she was

equally the slave of them herself. She doubted not herself the agent of some mysterious and revealing spirits. In solitude and loneliness might she be heard holding converse, as it were, with the children of the creation of her visionary mind. Though thus apparently unconnected with the things of this life, one cherished hope she had, but, like some hidden treasure buried in the concealed mines of earth, no one ever guessed at it,—none had an idea of the slavery her existence had now later in life endured to forward its realization.

Catherine was the child of shame; her mother to conceal her disgrace had past from her home, deserted by her friends, abandoned by her lover. She at last became the wife of one equally an outcast with herself; in Lydia Morris, even contamination could not wholly blight a better education, much of which she imparted to her child. Her husband was connected with a gang of coiners; among them was one, from whence he came, his name, or parentage,

no one could relate. In higher stations he had been—manner, intellect, personal appearance, all identified him as no low-born peasant; for months together he was absent, but always to return to Catherine, whom he had wedded, with renewed fondness. A few months before his death, he went on one of his accustomed journeys and took with him his child, not yet two years old,—he returned, but to breathe his last in his loving Catherine's arms. No sooner was he dead than Catherine deserted her parents and her associates. On a waste track of the glen, near Oakfield village, was a lonely cottage, there she dwelt under the assumed name of Madge Freeman; desolately her days seemed to wear away. She asked not for, nor accepted, the simplest token of kindness; her cottage door was unfastened by day and night; she was good and generous to all her poor neighbours—appeared to possess ample to supply her few wants, and, save for Kate Marlow and Frederic Stanley, shewed no earthly fond-

ness. Beauty still traced its character in her dark eye and raven hair ; her face and form was one which a Margaret of Anjou, or a Joan of Arc, might have possessed,—lofty, striking, born to command and subdue, bold, decisive. You might have asked why she looked so old, for it was not with years—the hair was untouched, the forehead unwrinkled, but the cheek was sallow, sunken. Her dress was a deep crimson kerchief twisted round her dark arched brow, a scarlet cloak, fastened round the throat, and falling in thick folds below her ankles. She wore a tight bodice and petticoat of brown cloth, and a handkerchief of the colour of her turban. She was tall to majesty, even dignified and graceful in movement, with a voice of strong deep intonations, neat to a degree in her cottage and person ; but there was at times a fearful and consuming fire in her aspect, that you turned from with trembling ; and perhaps it was there, as one evening Annee sought her cottage. She was seated by the decaying embers of a

wood fire, the declining rays of a March sun flickered through her narrow casement and partially fell on the figure as she sat in an old oaken chair. She was reclining back in a sort of dreamy quietness when Annee Owen knocked. She did not immediately answer, and Annee lifted the latch. She asked, "Who requires Madge?" scarcely raising her eyes.

"You are well, Madge, I hope;—I feared you had been ill;—I have not seen you for some time."

"Annee Owen, though the snow is pure that covers the dark path, think you I know not its track—'tis not of Madge thou comest to inquire,—'tis of thyself thou wouldst learn tidings. Why is thy eye red? Why is thy cheek moist? My glance has not past over thee, yet I know it is so."

"It is so, Madge."

"And what can I tell you of to dry it? Why ask me to read a fate that is not written? The flower closes under the burning beam, but opens to milder rays."

“ But there was a time, Madge, when Frederic deemed not my love too fondly shewn; and is this all the answer you give? Have you again consulted my horoscope?”

“ I would tell thee other had it been—look yonder; has it played false?” Annee did look through Madge’s casement, and, leaning on Stanley’s arm, she saw Kate Marlow; he had promised to spend this very evening with her mother and herself.

In vain she had waited for him; and, angry and wretched, she had sought Madge’s divination, trusting to find comfort in her idle predictions.

“ Thy knowledge is but too true,” said the weeping girl; “ Frederic Stanley loves me no longer. They are not coming in, are they?”

“ Coming in, maid! no, no; From whence sounds the ringdove’s note of love? is it not where the greenest leaves have made the closest shade?—look on them—look on them. What brings repentance to the murderer? Is it not



when he looks upon the blood-stained implement ? Look on it, and tear the poison from your young heart. See how they linger on the stile ; see how he marks out the picture to please her loving eye. I know what it is to love ; I know what it is to have so gazed,—so to drink in passion.”

“ Madge, Madge, in mercy hush ; you will drive me mad,” said the poor distracted Annee.”

“ Better be mad than pitied,” replied Madge, a sort of fiendish joy lighting up her countenance. “ Listen, Annee Owen. I once loved,—was loved again, ay, loved as the singing bird loves his mate,—loved as the parched earth loves the dew,—as echo loves the sound which makes it ; but it was love giving back love—true as imaged shadows on quiet waters. Annee, it was around us as the air we breathed ; but, think you, had he been false,—had he dared to turn to another,—think you I would have loved him ? No ! no ! I would have torn the hated thing from me, though chained to my heart by the life vein.



No ! no ! the dagger's point should have cut it asunder,—the precipice's edge should have passed from my feet,—the gulf beneath should have seen my mangled form ! Should I have shuddered at the water's chill embrace ? Better, far better, than be pressed to the heart that trembles for another, whose love has turned to the gall of hate. No ! no ! I would have hid me there, and left my curse for him who had played me false."

Pale, agonized, and silent, Annee stood fixed, with staring eyes on the tall passionate figure before her ; had she looked more calmly on that bold wild being she would have read triumph in her dark, deep glance, when she saw the influence her heated exaggeration had on herself.

Annee, at last, burst into hysteric sobs, as she said, " But, Madge, I have a mother,—a mother who loves me, whose hope, whose life I am ; how she has nurtured, how she has cherished me !"

" I know it, I know it." Madge drew breath a moment ; she paused, and then added —

“ When the thunder’s roar is past, our hearts’ terror passes with it, and heaven’s sky is cleared and the air refreshed ; but the dry scorching that gleams day after day on the waterless desert leaves it desolate and nourishless. What ! can mother’s eye bear to watch, think you, leaf fall away after leaf, sear and decay at her very feet. What ! see her child trod, trampled on ! No ! no ! ” Scorn and bitterness was in the voice of Madge as she spoke.

“ But, but it will all drive me mad ; and perhaps—and perhaps he is not false,” said Annee.

“ Then love him on, but come not to me. What fate has decreed, that I have divined unto you, Annee Owen ; but the twilight comes to darken your path, and your lover is not by your side to guard your step to-night. Come, I will with thee up the dark glen.”

“ I am not fearful, Madge ; I am too wretched to be so ; good night.”

“ And the sorrowing girl past quickly up the cold drear path of the glen—the swollen torrent

roared as it lashed over the masses of its rocky bed—the leafless trees rocked to the blast—the moon partially came out from the recesses of murky clouds ; the scene imparted a wild reckless haste to her step, a hurried excitement to her feeling. She paused on the plank bridge ; the light fell on the basin of waters that was filled from a fall of many feet through a chasm over which the bridge was flung ; 'twas smooth, 'twas sparkling as diamond.

“ All, all is still there ; it looks like a fairy's couch, so calm, so deep—all else is trouble, trouble, agitation. In agony she threw back her bonnet, her hair wildly—she lent over the slender fence of the bridge, looked again into the watery gulf—her eye was madly bright, her cheek was livid, yet a smile was on her cold white lips. A strange undefined impulse seized the suffering girl—a moment she paused—she started—she hears a footstep—and then she is prest to her lover's throbbing heart.

“ What ! what would you ? Mad, deluded girl as you are, still, Annee, I love, I idolize you ! ”

“ T’is false ! ’tis false, Frederic Stanley !” and with a struggle she released herself from his hold, and flew breathless to her home.

In vain, day after day, did Edward Stanley seek for one word, for one token of affection from her ; she would not listen, she would not speak, to him. Her mother trembled for her reason ; her strength was wasting—save when she went to the cottage of Madge she appeared perfectly dead to everything ; and that strange woman exercised a mysterious influence over her, one which was destroying every happier and better energy.

At last she consented to see Dora Lucy ; her reasoning persuaded her to meet Stanley, and they were reconciled again.

Frederic, though sincerely attached to her, could not draw his mind from the recollection of her the night he had seen her on the bridge ; a dread, a doubt was over him ; it gave coldness to his before warm affectionate manner ;—she was but too much alive to this change,—both felt they never could be what they had

been to each other. A blight it was to their once fond hearts; love was there, but it was love with all its thorns; its roses were scattered.

A painful contrast did Annee's mind, ill-regulated as it was, offer, when brought forward in review with Kate Marlow's, not that Frederic Stanley loved Kate Marlow for one instant with that passion which Annee still did and would ever inspire him with. The hope, the trust, that one day she would fall under the guidance of regulated principles such as Kate's, did often rise up to his anxious wishes. Though feeling Annee's charms fascinating beyond his power to tell or resist—a very being for a lover's idolatry—sometimes the sobered mind would speak of a future home, a wife, a companion; then Kate, in all her meek usefulness, in all her quiet attention, her gentle cultivation, rose pre-eminently lovely above the doubting, visionary, fond, enthusiastic Annee, the child of romance and passion; to exist with the one was like dwelling amidst the fresh clear air of a healthful climate;

with the other, as amidst the burning, exhausting one of a tropical fervour.

Summer was again at Oakfield; its church-yard violets were blooming; its willows waving in feathery greenness; another summer was sil-vering the head of the aged John Owen; another summer was spared to the increase of Peter Stanley's hoards. And they were both seated beneath that ancient yew tree where first we met Annee Owen and her lover. Time seemed to have robbed nothing from John's strength, and it had added much to Peter's stores.

“ Peter was merry to-day.”

“ Eess, eess, John. I will tell you a story about poor Neddy—a mighty nice lad is Neddy—does many jobs for old Molly—old Molly is getting into years—eess, eess—a mighty funny story ——”

“ Well, Master Peter, what may it be?”

“ Why—why—it be a mighty funny story: you know, Master John, Fred Stanley is a very nice lad, that he be; and he knows I be fond of

a bit of delicacy—so he takes his gun—he be a good shot, that he be—and I love a bit of game, that I do—so he brings me a nice woodcock, a nice woodcock it was—so I thought of a Sunday I would have it all ready like when I come back from Oakfield church. Molly is mighty old, and poorly like—so I said, Molly, go you to bed, and Neddy will cook the woodcock; but somehow the sermon was overlong, and I stepped in to taste a drop of your ale—mighty good ale that be of yours, Master Owen—eess, eess, that it be. What, what think did Master Neddy—he got famishing, and, and la! Master John, you’ll laugh—and ’fore I came home, he took the cock off the spit and eat it, eess, eess, every crumb.”

“The young rascal,” said John Owen; “what did you do to him?”

“Eess, eess, I pisoned him.”

“Poisoned him!” all his listeners exclaimed.

“Eess, eess,” and one of Peter’s muscular changes was visible on his features. “Eess,



eess; when I came back, there he was at the doctor's, flinging like and kicking. 'I be a dead man, I be a dead man,' Neddy cried; 'Lord, Master Peter, forgive me; I drank the pison in the big bottle, every drop of it.' What! what! could not you spell, Neddy; it was all written big on it—eess, eess, he be pisoned—he be pisoned—eess, eess." And even old Peter shook again with laughter, while his auditors stared at him. "Eess, eess, Neddy, you be pisoned—kick and fling. What, what made ye touch the big bottle, and eat the cock? 'Why, Master Peter, I eat the woodcock, and then I drank the pison for fear, and now I be come to the doctor, for I be afraid to die, indeed I be.' Eess, eess, but you beant pisoned; but you be drunk, for I knew you would be meddling with the big bottle, so I wrote 'pison' on it. Eess, eess, doctor, it be only mighty nice port wine; it be fifty years old; eess, eess, be mighty nice port wine, it be fifty years in father's cellar."



And the many villagers who were sauntering about the church were all gathered to hear Peter's tale. Annee joined her grandsire, but she scarcely smiled ; she looked pale and wearied.

“ And where is Fred, Mistress Annee—eess, eess, it be a mighty bad sort of a thing that place he goes to with Kate Marlow—the church, the good old church is the place ; those metho-dist men be always begging : ‘ Doey give us something for books ’ they do come and ask me, ‘ doey now, Master Peter.’—Eess, eess, I never gives my money for charity to others—father always said to me, ‘ Peter, do your own charity, do your own charity yourself’—eess, eess, father always said that.”

“ I think, indeed,” replied John Owen, “ the church is the place. See how beautiful it is to see that good man, our rector ; there he is now, coming along with all those fine children and grandchildren, and his good smiling face—he that has learnt to be a parson since he was a child—and see how good humoured and how humble

like he speaks to one and bows to another; Heaven will bless such a good man as that. Come, Annee, your arm,—what takes Fred Stanley to that conventicle?" added old Owen, somewhat pettishly; "it is that Kate Marlow; I thought you were to go to Dartmoor church with him."

"So I was; I will wait for him, and will leave you at the church door."

She did so, and then turned back, not to wait for her lover, but to bend her steps to the cottage of Madge.

The evening previous to this, Stanley had uttered words (which from him appeared harsh and unkind) on her unjust suspicions of Kate, and had expressed a wish that she resembled her in principles and gentleness: but they had parted friends, and he was to come over and take her to church in the evening. On his way he met Kate, who told him she had just seen Madge, and that Annee had directed her, if she saw him, to say she was not going to church, for Mrs. Owen was not at all well.

“ So, Frederic, do come with me,” said Kate, “ over to the Hill chapel ; it is so lonely in the evening that I am afraid to return by myself ; and I do so long to go to hear Mr. Dodd, he preaches so beautifully ; and he is such a holy, good man, one believes all he tells them. Come, you seem unhappy ; nothing comforts one like godly and righteous words.”

He went :—on their way they met Madge.

“ Tell Annee, if you see her, that I am gone to the Hill chapel, but shall come up to see how her mother is in the evening when I return.”

“ Fear me not,” said Madge.

And long after they had passed on, Frederic and Kate saw her on the brow of a hill following them with her eye.

“ How I wish,” said Kate, “ I could infuse something like belief into poor Madge’s mind. I have strove hard to do it, poor deluded being. I wonder who she can be ; though her love to me is strangely affectionate, she never tells me

of her former life, but for hours does she talk over her husband. She has his picture, beautifully painted, and such a handsome man, almost too handsome for a husband ; he would make one look upon the creature with heart too fond ; he would draw one from heaven to earth."

" *You* might know such a one, Kate ;—*you* could never love anything earthly too fervently."

" Think you so, Frederic Stanley ?—I trust not."

" I should say, certainly not ; all your passions and feelings are so under command."

" But, Stanley, it is the deepest brook that wears the calmest surface."

For a moment Stanley looked at her ; her eye fell—her cheek crimsoned ; and did the tiny hand that rested on his arm tremble ?—but in an instant she was herself again.

" We spoke of Madge. I said I wished I could lead her into the paths of peace and grace."

“ If any could, I am sure you could ; she seems to worship you as a being too good to be loved.”

“ Yes ; her love is great ; and, strange to say, with all this unseemliness about her, still, do you know, Frederic, I love her. I love to go down to her cottage, and read and sing to her ; she says it makes her happy—it makes her better. She often wishes to cast my nativity, and tell my fortune, but such things are a sin before God. Our fate is in his hand, and we have only to submit in patience and humility.”

“ You may say so, and not yet have been exercised ; you are a very happy person, Kate.”

“ Perhaps I am so—doubtless ought to be—but sin will dwell in the heart, and where sin is, peace cannot be.”

“ But you, Kate, seem the most blameless of human beings.”

“ That cannot be ; for humble I cannot be ; thy present words joy me too much, Frederic Stanley, to leave me so. My feet are on their

way to the house of God, but my heart drinks in man's praise as sweet music, and is not that sin, Frederic." A blush was on Kate's cheek, a light was in her eye, and a tremulous tone was slightly visible in her soft gentle voice ; but if Kate knew they were there, she would have had it otherwise if she could.

" Kate, methinks thou art over severe to thyself ; thou wouldst be what thou nearly art, which is, perfect in thy holiness."

" Cease, Frederic ; let us talk of better things than my poor self, as we take our steps, as I said before, to the house of God."

And perhaps Stanley was glad to turn the subject, for how different was her meek pure converse to his Annee's.

They returned home after the chapel service was finished, and of course the first place Stanley went to was Owen cottage.

He inquired for Mrs. Owen,—Mrs. Owen was out and very well,—had been very well all day.

Was Miss Owen with her?—No ; they had not seen her since just before church ; her mother and grandsire had returned and gone out together after the service.—Did the servant know which way Miss Owen had gone ?

“ She believed towards the glen.”

Strange thoughts rushed over the mind of Frederic Stanley—he trembled from head to foot ; the servant stared, but he was unconscious, and, turning quickly away, he passed onwards in the direction of the glen. Deeming she might have gone to Madge’s, he rather ran than walked there ; he did not pass the plank bridge, it was the longest way, and his throat felt parched till he had heard tidings of her. It was at a moment like this he felt how madly he loved the fond, jealous girl. Pale, panting, he reached Madge’s cottage ; breathlessly he enters—it is deserted—a glove and handkerchief are on the table ; fear rises into horror ; he took them, he pressed them to his lips. Where, where could she be ? He recalled her manner,

her look, her incoherency, of the previous evening. “Where, where can she be?”—and he uttered it aloud. Madly he flew on—he remembered her on that dread night on the plank bridge—a nameless horror burnt within him—his pulse beat quick—his limbs trembled. Why, why could he not fly to the spot which was before his glazed sight?—on, on he went.

“Annee, Annee, my own loving Annee.”—Recklessly he rushed up the glen, and never paused to question the phantom which led him on.

“Oh! my God!”—as he drew breath, and said, “Shall I never reach it?”—he bounds over the last stile—he sees the bridge rising as if hung in air—he hears the roar of the torrent—he is on the plank bridge—he looks down the dizzy chasm—the waters go dancing down in the sun—the light branches dip into the smooth basin below—the birds sing over head—the blue sky is clear—the sabbath hum of quietness is over all—but where, where is Annee?



His fears are false.—Not here—not here. He sees a figure amidst the trees—he flies forward, but it is not Annee—it is Madge—“ Tell me, tell me—where, where is she ?”

“ Where ! Frederic Stanley !”—and oh the glaring eye of that woman ; it was terrible to look on—“ Ask me not where—’tis none of my work—’tis the devil’s, ’tis the devil’s ! Yonder, yonder.” She pointed to an open book—it was a holy book. He took it up—his sight was dizzy, yet he took it up—he read the marked passage—it was the *109th Psalm*—every line was *a curse*—A CURSE. On the margin was pencilled—

“ For Frederic Stanley. Seek me in the gulphing flood, and thou shalt find thy victim—Annee Owen.” He made a rush towards the stream—he was held back, and then fell senseless on the ground.

When his eyes opened, it was not to look upon the gleams of a setting sun—it was not to hear the bird’s singing note—the water’s murmur—

or to feel the cool evening air. No, no ; it was to look upon the corpse of his loved Annee. How could he look upon it, yet have sight to behold it ?

There it lay on the fresh green grass—stiff—cold—lifeless;—yet even in death how beautiful. He gazed upon it—laughed wildly—raised it in his arms—wrung the long, long black hair—kissed the icy lips—chafed the deathly hand—then cried aloud that she breathed. He looked up, and he beheld the living eyes of Madge, flaring like balls of fire on him;—they were frightfully bright.

“ Ah ! ah ! fiend ! fiend ! it is thou, it is thou that hast done the deed ! ”

“ ’Tis false !—yet I could have done it for the hate I bore that dead thing. *I* did it not, Frederic Stanley. It was not *my* hand, but the hand of destiny, and thou shalt live to bless that destiny.”

“ Begone, begone !— why, why stand you there—perhaps she is not dead.”

“What wouldst thou — has she not curst thee?”

“’Tis false, she loved me to the last,” and again he pressed her cold lips, and the big tears rolled down his colourless cheeks. And thus, while another hour was passing, was Stanley alone, for Madge was gone.

And when they came, they found him stupid, calm, almost motionless, but still holding the lifeless body, and he was led from the spot as if an infant. The silence of that woe was more speaking than sigh or groan—it was a bitter sight.

The parent’s eye looked not on her dead child; delirium for days followed the intelligence. But there were two who leant over that cold form, and words may not paint their anguish. One was that aged man, his silver hair fell on her deathly cheek; he knelt beside her—he rested her very brow. To see tears dim eyes that for more than ninety years had looked on sorrow, was a harrowing thing;—they fell hot

and large from those old eyes upon the cold, cold cheek that felt them not. The darling of his life,—the soul that bound him to earth; even life itself—was gone from him, though he still walked the earth. It was a sight, indeed, to make the angels weep—that hoary man kneeling by his dead lost child.

Then was there another; she who never seemed moved now broke forth in unchecked agonizing lamentations; it seemed as if feeling had been pent up from infancy to burst out at this moment; even the voice of prayer, that was ever breathing its soothing from her lips, was now silenced in the agony of grief.

“Sister, friend, companion—lovely, lovely Annee—speak, speak to me”—she would utter again and again; but all was vain,—what could call her back to life? A green grass grave is seen beside that drooping willow and sable urn, where Annee, fresh with youth and devoted affection, was wont to kneel at a parent’s grave;—all that tells of Annee Owen is her name on

that sable urn. Violets bloom beside her grave, and fond affection drops many a tear to her unhappy fate. It is not alone the tears which water this grave that tell how Kate loved her friend. Her love is shewn in days and months of ceaseless attention to the mother and grandsire of her she weeps so young; for who is that pale, sad girl, who for after years smooths the pillows of the couch of Annee's mother, and kneels and prays beside it?—who leads that grandsire, now blind with grief and time, to sit in the warm sunshine beneath the aged oak of the village green? It is the meek, quiet Kate Marlow.

And whither is he gone—the anathematized? —the curse, like a fiend, hunting his footsteps, as a burning plague-spot on his brain. Does his step touch the holy church's threshold?—in trembling it draws back, lest the harrowing sound of its words meet his ear. Thinks he of a domestic home? Shall not its venom distil poison there?

Years went on, and found Frederic Stanley was a wanderer in strange and unchristian lands, but change could bring no change to him. In dreams, his own terrible voice would wake him as he would cry aloud, — “ My Annee, my dearest Annee, close the book—close the book !” Did nature spread her glories before him ? All spoke of Annee—the stream, the trees, the flowers, the green grass. That curse blasted all—turned all to ashes ; phantom like, it became the madness of his brain.

Many years passed over. John Owen numbered the last of his days ; and Peter too was gathered to his fathers. In the funeral of each might be read their life. The flowers and beehives had their mourning on,\* and every eye its tear, when good old John Owen died. But for Peter Stanley not one wept—not a voice cried, God forgive, God bless his soul,—but sounds harsh, nay worse, told how he had lived. A

\* A custom in Devonshire to put crape on the hives and flowers at the death of a much respected person.

blessing he had never bestowed—no blessing did he receive ; hooting and hissing were his death-knell. Paid menials walked beside his hearse, but not one sorrowing friend. His nephew and heir was a wanderer, a mourning stranger, in foreign lands ; no kindred was left to claim his heritage. “ He had heaped up riches,” and none of his own remained to possess them ;—“ he could not tell who should gather them.” A speaking end was that old hoarding man’s. Was it on him the curse had fallen?—was the stranger only left to “ spoil his labour ?” As “ he delighted not in blessing, was it far from him ?”—his generation, was it blotted out ? or did they seek bread in “ desolate places ” ? Perhaps so ; for years past over and his millions were still in abeyance. Frederic Stanley was not returned ; no tidings of the wanderer came from distant lands ; nor since the day which had seen the green sward pressed on the lifeless remains of her who in her dying agony had cursed him, was he seen or heard of, save

some wondrous marvels of him and Madge were whispered about, for both had alike been lost to sight. Gossiping said much, but truth certainly revealed not the track of his miserable footsteps. Besides his parent there was another whose tears never ceased to weep his absence, whose prayers hushed not even when midnight silence was around her ; he seemed all that drew her thoughts from heaven to earth ;—she fulfilled her rules of life, but her spirit was not of this world.

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It was the dead hour of night, and the cold “ round moon ” looked upon a land wrapped in a winding-sheet of snow. The leafless white branches drooped over the chill scene, forming in their deep recesses very sepulchres of sadness and death-like loneliness. Even the drear bird of night hid herself from the chillness, and hushed her note to silence ; all was so motionless, so fixed, that nature, beneath that pale,



shining moon, looked as if a world of sculptured work — so unbreathing, so marble-like—not a sound broke on the listening ear of midnight. And Kate Marlow had been watching for hours beside the sick bed of Madge Freeman.

A few years had worked hard on Madge ; but where, from Annee's death till now, she had sheltered, no one ever knew. On the morning of this night she had written to beseech Kate to come to her, appointing a lone deserted cottage, much deeper in the glen than her former abode, as the place of meeting.

“ I have marvellous, vital, but no longer unholy, revelations to make unto thee, beloved. Come, witness what the outpourings of thy godly words have done in bringing healing to the penitent soul of the dying Madge.”

Kate delayed not ; perhaps the fate of her loved lost, early friend, was about to be disclosed ; perhaps *she* had not cursed him.

And without a guide Kate took her path up the now trackless glen ; and hopes, which had

long lain dormant for Annee and for Frederic Stanley, were called forth. With quick and light step she went.

When arrived, she found Madge alone, and stretched upon a wretched bed. She was sick and faint ; her eye had lost its wild lustre ; her cheek was even more sunk and sallow than formerly ; the raven hair was white as silver. A radiance suddenly past over her exhausted countenance as she first beheld Kate, and then as suddenly vanished, and left it wan and haggard. She took Kate's hand, and pressed it to her dry, pale lips.

“ You are cold, Madge ; I have brought you a cordial ;—it is a long time past since you visited our land.”

“ Thou art an angel, and she ought to be blessed that calls thee child. My eye is dim, sweet Kate, but thy voice is pleasant to my heart ; though I am as ‘ the shadow of a dark rock in a weary land,’ yet thy voice, Kate, to mine ear, is like the heavenly choir that sang

their promises to the watching shepherds of Bethlehem."

"It makes me rejoice, dear Madge, to hear you thus speak."

"Yes, my child, thou first told me of salvation—thou first told me that there was repentance for a sinner, to be bought by bitter tears drawn from the deep wells of the inmost soul; I would have said, but for thee, beloved, that no eye had seen me. My sins and my wickednesses have haunted me as a fierce lion. He is wise who can remove mountains, and they know it not—that shaketh the earth, that maketh its pillars tremble—so has the soul of Madge been subdued; I trust she has been forgiven, though her sins were as scarlet."

"What dread thing art thou about to shew unto me?" asked the trembling Kate. "Canst thou throw any light upon my friend's sad end? didst thou instigate her to the deed? didst thou *murder* her?"

"No, Kate, no—I did not murder her with my hands." Madge paused, and took breath.

“ Not with thy hands !” repeated the scarce articulate accent of Kate. “ What, what mean you ?”

“ That I did it even with words, deeper, deadlier than the poison of asps—Heaven ! Heaven ! hear my prayer for forgiveness !” and fervent seemed that prayer.

“ Honey was on my lips, Kate, but gall was in my heart; but it was for thee, for thee.”

“ For me, Madge ; put not on a burden too heavy for my weary steps to stand under.”

But Madge was too weak to speak more ; she had fainted, and in a state of torpor she lay for hours trying hours for Kate, far distant from human aid at this lone hour of night ! She prayed, she sung, for perchance that voice which Madge said she loved might rouse her. How holily arose that saintly sound on the dead hush. But Kate’s breath came quick—her heart throbbed ; she raised her head ; she looked up through the window—what was there standing between her and the light of the cold round

moon ? She shuddered—again she looked—was it a spectre ?—no ! it was a living thing—the foot approaches—the latch is lifted.

“ Kate ! Kate ! ” the figure said, “ Time sears the face, the figure—but the voice, the voice that has once thrilled the heart with rapture—never.”

“ Stanley ! Frederic Stanley ! Speak, speak again. Oh ! tell, tell Kate Marlow she dreams not ; tell, tell her she is not mad—oh ! oh ! this is too much joy as she gazed up into his face—touched his arms. Say thou art indeed the living, breathing Frederic Stanley, the dear friend of my youth—yes, yes, thou art.”

“ Yes, Kate, yes ; I am that wretched creature.”

“ I see it, I know it, I feel it ; let me not doubt it again.” She gazed intently into his face, and Madge and all the world was forgotten. “ And you will not go from us, you will abide with us—yes, you will. Frederic ! Frederic ! forgive this unwomanly greeting ; but to see

thee once again, to know thee living, is too much joy for poor Kate Marlow ;” and tears released her bursting heart.

“ Kate Marlow still ! and why ? Do I guess aright ?”

“ Yes, you knew it could not be other, Frederic Stanley.”

“ I have sometimes thought me so—and thou wilt not curse me—thou wilt not leave me desolate, scorn, deride me. It was not till this moment I felt that anything above, below, could love me. And you love me, Kate ?”

“ Love you, Frederic Stanley ! Ask me not ; say it not ; for I should——I know not what I say.”

“ Only say thou wilt not curse me.”

“ What voice is that which calls me from the dead ?” asked Madge, rising up and staring round her as if her eye-balls would start from their sockets. “ Is it Frederic Stanley ? is it my father’s heir that calls on me to behold his riches ? I care not for gold ; I care not for gold for myself ; but give it, give it to my child ; but

with it give thy love ; that—that is the precious thing to her virgin heart, beyond all the gold of the earth.”

At the voice of Madge, Stanley’s whole frame quivered, as in vehemence he exclaimed, “ Has not justice avenged her wrong ? Why art thou spared ?—why art thou spared, thou wicked one ? ”

“ Why am I spared ? Ask that meek child of the earth ; the rod for the wicked is in the hand of the Lord, and shall He not be avenged ? Shall not the humble be exalted ? shall not the penitent be forgiven ? Yes, listen, and tremble to learn who speaks to thee.” And a dazzle and a blaze lighted every feature of Madge’s before wan face, as she raised herself in her bed. “ Kate Marlow, Kate Marlow, thou art the child of—of ——,” and she drew forth the picture of her husband. “ Yes, yes, of him thou hast for hours looked upon—yes, yes, I was the wedded, wedded wife of Conran—yes, he was the husband of my first, of my only adoration. Look

not so pale on me, my child—doubt it not; these big tears must tell thee that I am thy mother—they have never fallen since I laid him in the cold earth. Look not incredulous—I will tell thee all, and then thou wilt give me my thy tears of affection—I know, I know thou wilt. Start not, Frederic Stanley—my mother was the injured, the wronged Lydia Marlow of thy sordid uncle's lawless passion. Doubt it not, I am but too truly the blasted, blighted offspring of that unsanctified connexion,"—and she held up a small packet. But she spoke words to the deaf; Kate lay senseless in the arms of Stanley. In vain he told her, her expiring mother asked but for one word of love—she could not speak it.

“ Frederic Stanley, listen to a dying mother's prayer—give her one earthly moment of joy. Wilt thou wed my child?—wilt thou?”

“ I will be the husband of Kate Marlow, be she thy child or not, if she will wed me, the cursed one.”



“ Blessed, blessed sound ; she has loved thee from childhood—loves, loves thee as I loved Conran. Cherish, cherish her as he cherished her mother. Blessed, blessed moment — my child ! child of my husband ! pray, pray for me, a dying penitent ;” and Catherine Conran was a breathless corpse.

The truth of Madge’s statements were proved beyond denial. Kate Marlow had been brought by her father to Oakfield, and her aunt consented to take charge of her, provided her mother never asked to see her or be made known to her. Conran too well knew what his child would be exposed to, to refuse these conditions. It was a dreadful sacrifice on the part of Catherine, for she doted on her child ; and on her husband’s death, determined to reside in the neighbourhood, but to abide by her promise, which she faithfully did till this her dying hour. Her husband left her far above want ; and under the assumed name of Madge Freeman, she rented the cottage in the glen, where she

lived till Annee's awful end, when, fearful she might involve her child, she quitted it for a more distant home, at the same time never losing sight of Kate Marlow.

When she first came to reside in the glen, Annee Owen and Frederic were but children ; but she saw how they were circumstanced at one glance. To see her child united to Stanley became the whole aim and end of her existence ; and, watching the jealous disposition of Annee, she determined to work upon that as a means to obtain her ends in severing Frederic from her. That the fatal termination which occurred was her aim or wish, we will not say ; but be that as it may, to her alone the final result is attributable. So completely had she worked on the poor deluded Annee's mind and feelings on that dread twenty-first of June, that, in a frenzy of high-wrought angry madness and jealousy, she rushed to the awful spot, paused a moment with the holy book in her hand, stung to agony at her lover's supposed falsity, marked the dire

token of her dying spirit on its pages, and then plunged into the overwhelming gulf beneath.

And Frederic Stanley was returned. He who had looked upon himself as a marked and branded being returned to a heritage, not of thousands, but millions. He might now set up golden idols, and behold what worshippers would follow his footsteps; but there were seeds of sorrow within his breast that even all this vaunted influence and power could not scorch up; they would grow amidst all, and bear the fruit of care and wretchedness. Amidst splendour, luxury, and ease, he lived; charity in profusion was ever flowing from his hand; benevolence was ever breathing in his heart; intellectual cultivation employed his hours; but the *curse* was written in his heart and in his brain, though the soothing affection of the sweet, gentle, loving, and beloved Kate, was devotedly offering every moment of life to calm and quench its burning character.

“ We will not stay us here, my love, when

we are wedded," said he, a few days previous to their splendid nuptials, for Stanley thought as his uncle had hoarded, so ought he to spend unsparingly.

"No, dear Frederic, not if you wish it other ; to be with thee, to comfort thee, and pray with thee as I have prayed for thee in thy absence, is all thy Kate asks."

"And thou hast prayed for me when I dared not do so for myself."

"Yes, Frederic ; when every eye was closed I have thought of thee, and asked for that peace I could not find, for my heart was with thee ; and in prayer, if I felt not peace, I felt security, for I said, He that listens unto that prayer is looking, watching over thee."

"How, dearest Kate, with all this fondness within thy heart, didst thou never, in happier days, let one little word of its intensity fall from thee ?"

"Why, Frederic, because I loved thee dearer than I loved myself. I would not pain

you by letting you deem you could blight the happiness of the companion of your childhood—of one I knew you ever loved with a brother's tenderness."

"And did it not torture thee, gentle one, so to conceal?"

"Torture me! I shudder now to think how I trembled then lest a word, a look, should have betrayed my unmaidenly, because unwished, unsought love."

"Yet there was a look, nay, a word, that has been with me in thy recollection—it was on that Sunday,—yes, Kate, I cherished it, though my heart was hers, all hers; but I must love thee,—I must be all I ought to be to one so pure, so excellent."

"Yes, yes, Frederic, I doubt you not,—I confide all in thy truth. I know thou wilt treasure thy wife's tenderness—I will yet chasten every sorrow—I will be to thee such a fond, devoted, loving wife."

And wedded, they went their way in splen-

dour from their native village, blest with all that wealth can give—wealth possessed, not to hoard, but to bestow.

Was the twenty-first of June forgotten? No! flattery, gratitude, love, not even the cherub smile of infancy, could win the heart to oblivion; to look on that at intervals was madness. Even Kate's strong mind sometimes dwelt upon the dreadful thing; for what if on the children as well as on the parent perchance might fall the legacy of that dire curse,—what if on them too it became a realized prophecy—how then thousand times dearer did those dear ones become; how she watched, how she cherished them! There were hours when Kate was supremely blest as wife and mother; but others were fearful ones—when the dark spirit was around her husband. At last it worked its evil influence, and Kate was left a mourning widow. Of her grief we will not discourse. But it was yet for the *curse* to work a still deeper impress on her mind.

At Stanley's dying hour he said, "Take me to the last home of my forefathers—lay my ashes with theirs, sweet loving wife." It was many miles distant. The funeral reached the village; it was Sunday, and evening service was performing. The hearse stopped at the church-gate. The clock struck four—four, the hour of Annee's dreadful death—now fifteen years ago. Many within that holy place shuddered as they heard its sound. Still more wondrous, the 109th Psalm, in its ordinary course, was falling from the lips of good Mr. Lucy and those of his parishioners at the very moment. They all knew whom the hearse bore within it — and they remembered *The Curse*.

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N.B.—The chief facts of this tale are founded on a circumstance related by Polwhele, particularly this latter one, for, says he—

"Observe a strange coincidence of circumstances; for while the body lay in the church,

to the astonishment of all the congregation, who knew that the 109th Psalm had caused his death, that very psalm came to be read in the ordinary course. Against this event there was more than sixty to one. And that his funeral should also happen on a Sunday, at four o'clock in the afternoon, exactly corresponding to the time in which the girl destroyed herself, is another remarkable occurrence."



# AGNES DORVILLE;

OR,

## FIRST LOVE.

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“ But this was taught me by the dove—  
To die, and know no second love.”

“ Leila ! each thought was only thine,  
My good, my guilt, my weal, my woe,  
My hope on high—my all below,  
Earth holds no other like to thee ;  
Or, if it doth, in vain for me.”

“ THIS is ineed a fine old English place,” said Selina Dorville, as her mother and herself stopped opposite to an ancient gothic gateway, opening on a shadowy avenue of massive and embowering elm, skirted by thick underwood, which led to a mansion of aristocratic magnificence ; but its path was now grassy and untracked, and all told of rankness and neglect,

silence, and solitude—the tomb of departed ones. Nothing broke its stillness save the noisy inhabitants of its lofty shades—the rook’s hoarse, ceaseless note knelling all Nature’s softer chime. “I wonder,” continued Selina, “if Davenant can tell us aught of those who have lived here?”—a brightening blush welcoming his approach, for he was the happy suitor of the fair Selina Dorville.”

“Few can, I think, Selina,” replied her mother, with a voice and countenance of sadness, “give you any information of its former dwellers. It is a sorrowing tale; perhaps you may learn it one day—but not now. Davenant, I am sure, knows nought about it.”

“How I wish to learn something of it; it must have been ages since this old house has been inhabited.”

“Not so long a period, either, has elapsed,” replied Mrs. Dorville. “It has seen many a gay and festive scene within *my* knowledge.”

“*Your* knowledge, mamma! Why you did

not mention ever having passed any time in this part of Kent."

"Because, my dear child, I *would*, and I *would not*, wish to remember much and all connected with this place. I wished, yet dreaded to visit it once again. Your father's feelings would not have allowed him to have done so, I know. All its recollections, like itself, are but a shadow of what they once were. We will ask to see the pictures. There were many choice ones amongst the selection—*two*, to me, of the deepest interest."

"Then you knew those well who lived here? Did I ever know them?"

"Doubtless, in childhood you may have heard their names. You did not leave India till you were six or seven, did you?"

"I was just seven when papa placed me under Madam Bruyere's care, at St. Omer. He told me of some relations, but I forget their names—are these the same?"

"Perhaps so; but I did not know your father

then, at least *only* by name. To-day you will look on a picture, love it love it, dearer than you love *me*—carry its remembrance away with you, and dwell on the remembrance as on that of a dear lost parent !”

“ You will point it out to me ?”

“ I doubt not but your own feelings will do that,—but no more, my child.” And Mrs. Dorville lingered behind, while Selina walked silently on ; though leaning on the arm of her lover, she was but thinking of *the picture*.

“ How I long to look at the picture, Charles.”

“ Let me remember,” replied he ; “ I heard something about a picture the last time I was here. The place is sadly fallen into decay since ; it is nothing but brambles and ruin. I heard something, too, about a fishing-lodge—a dreadful tale—it was *all* connected with a Countess St. Aubin, whose picture was concealed by a curtain. It is now four years since I was here.”

“ Can that be the picture mamma alludes to ?

Did you ever hear that mamma was connected with the St. Aubins?"

"Yes; I have heard it from others, but never from herself. Had not your father a sister?"

"Yes, that is true; I do remember, when a child, having received a letter from an aunt—but that was not the name. Is it not very odd that neither papa or mamma should ever have spoken of the St. Aubins?"

"Very strange indeed!" replied Davenant, and on they proceeded without further remark.

Mr. Dorville, the father of Selina, had married young; and after a few months' stay in England, sailed for India with his wife. She did not live long, and dying, left this one daughter at the age of seven. He brought his child to England, who was then placed abroad for her education; but before he again left England for India, he was united to his present wife. Mrs. Dorville was soon obliged to return to her native country on account of her health, and since that period Selina

Dorville had resided with her stepmother, to whom she was devotedly attached.

Selina was to be shortly married to Charles Davenant—a young man possessed of many personal advantages—his fortune ample, and his station high. They only waited Mr. Dorville's arrival in England, who was daily expected from India. Mrs. Dorville had long wished to visit this spot, and deeming the young lovers would much prefer the fair scenery of K—— to the smoky streets of London, the party had come down to M—— for a few days.

Davenant was quickly dispatched to Lord St. Aubin's agent, to apply for permission to view the interior of the mansion; as, since the family had quitted St. Aubin, the house had been closed against all intruders; but Mrs. Dorville's name at once gained the desired permission.

The party, having passed through the gate and along the neglected approach, were now arrived at the noble mansion. Moss was on its

steps—the hinges of its portals were rusty—its windows dim and dusty, with damp and cobweb. Davenant pulled the bell; its wire was stiff, and its sound was heard as it echoed hollowly through halls unoccupied and tenantless.

There is no loneliness like the loneliness of desertion; and the whole party, though they spoke not, felt that some hidden sympathy of intense interest united them. Footsteps came, sounding their melancholy way. Slowly and with difficulty bolt and bar were removed. The doors were opened, and they stood within the lofty dome of that princely hall. It was cold and chilling.

As they entered, Selina's eye turned to look at her mother, whose countenance was painfully agitated, and more particularly so when greeted by the housekeeper, who was a most interesting object. Her dress, demeanor, her whole appearance, at once took you back considerably beyond half a century. The white silver hair turned up, in full bow, under a high, close,

lace cap, whose whiteness was only rivalled by the kerchief that was crossed over her chest, and fastened under her equally snowy apron ; her gown, like everything pertaining to her, was not after the modern march of intellect ; it was plaited full into a long tight back, and open in front ; its material was of thick black silk, hung with all the fulness of a hoop ; the sleeves, perfectly shaped to the arm, descended just below the elbow, and were finished with ruffles. A pair of black mittens, high-heel pointed shoes, and by her side a small bunch of keys, completed her costume.

The countenance had been one of much beauty, and though time might have marked, it was far from destroying it. A peachy bloom was still on the cheek, a fairness on the wrinkled brow, a clearness in the hazel eye—that keen eye was now fixed on the party.

A glance passed between her and Mrs. Dorville, and the latter placed her finger on her lip, and whatever Mrs. Moore, for that was the



housekeeper's name, was about to say was instantly silenced.

Davenant handed her the permission, and she took it with a low courtesy, as she replied, "Had you not received this, I scarcely think I could have said nay to your admittance for the sake of this young lady; not that I mean to flatter you, sweet lady, but you are so like one blessed spirit that was as fresh and as beautiful as yourself the first time I ever laid eyes on her." And before she proceeded, she looked round, evidently to observe if Mrs. Dorville was within hearing; but she had separated from them the moment the party had entered, and Mrs. Moore continued:—

"I could tell you how happy we were all the day the Countess came to preside over us, like a queen so beautiful, yet she was as meek and gentle as a lamb! And my lord, too, with his fine proud walk, worshipping the lovely lady his wife; they looked both like real nobles of the land, so dignified and humble! On this

very spot," as the old woman stood against one of the fine white marble pillars of the hall,—  
"yes,—we were all ranged to welcome my lord and my lady." And her eye proudly glanced round the spacious walls, which were still ornamented with old-fashioned portraits, and many a now rusty implement of war and sport.

"Yes," she continued; "I was just here at the head, for *I* was my lady's housekeeper then; it is a long day since; I was not young then; but she was *very* young, and a flower she was—none like her, so full of bloom. My very heart was in my mouth to tell her how I respected her. Dear, loved lady!" and the old woman brushed a tear from her eye.

"This lovely lady was Countess of St. Aubin?" asked Selina.

"Yes, yes; she was *his* wife."

"Is she alive?"

"Alive!" And Mrs. Moore crossed her hands on her bosom, and looked on high, as

she added,—“ Hopes in a merciful Father, I trust that she is long since gathered to her last blessed home. Peace be with that sweet spirit !” and there was something sadly touching in her voice and face as she spoke it.

“ But I would wish to tell you more, fair lady, for you are like her, but not so beautiful. Shall I say how she passed before us all the first day she entered these portals as our mistress ! How she blushed, and smiled, and spoke to all some pretty thing. ‘ Ah, Mrs. Moore, always be as you have been, and I shall only be too fortunate in having one so trusty in my service ; and I only hope all under your direction will know how to value your worth as my lord and self do.’ She then laughed, and said something of my old-fashioned dress. ‘ How I should wish we might all follow its style !’ And she, smiling like an angel wife, addressed my lord by his name, saying, ‘ Do you not think it very becoming ?’ And he looked at her, sweet innocence, as much as to

say, 'What can be so pretty as yourself?' But she was a happy wife then; she was scarce twenty, but yet she bore herself so lofty, she might have ruled the world. And our eyes and hearts followed her, as, leaning on her handsome lord, she bowed to us, and went into the grand saloon yonder."

"Is her picture here?" asked Selina.

"Yes; her first likeness is in the gallery."

And impatiently they followed Mrs. Moore. They passed on, but Selina's eye rested not a moment; though shewn on all sides the wild romance of a Salvator, the strength of a Rembrandt, and the enchantment of a Claude, she only sought the picture of the Countess.

"This is it," said Charles.

"It is indeed, Sir," and the old woman's eye glistened as she gazed upon it, with all the faithful affection of a devoted servant. "And like it is, the first time I ever saw her, but not like her the last time. Never did I so love my good lord, even in his youth, as I did the

day he ordered it to be put back. Heaven reward him for it!"

"Put back!—why, was it ever removed?" said Selina.

But Mrs. Moore was annoyed with herself for having said so much. "Yes, yes,"—she continued hastily, and then went on about its resemblance. "Just like her; those same dimples and the same pretty naughty eye,—all so smiling."

The picture was one of a very young being, and the execution was exquisite; so blended, so luxuriant, yet softened in all its hues and lines, it seemed starting and speaking to you from out the canvass; every tint harmonizing with the youthful representation. It was of one just verging into girlhood; fresh as the first opening of a rosebud, ere even the breath of summer has passed over it, or touched its bloom. The figure, perhaps, was sufficiently embonpoint to make you guess the age was more than might have been deemed from the countenance. And,

perhaps, the fine modelled bust rather too formed and full for a face of almost cherub infancy. The hair was of the deepest shade of brown, falling about the throat and head in rich wild curls, as if just blown aside by a sunny breeze, or disordered in a game of romps, for the whole character of the picture bore the stamp of coquettish frolic;—yet, oh! not altogether. Though the countenance was rather one of Grecian softness, yet in the upper lines—that is, the forehead and brow, you might read sense, integrity, and superiority; a spirit to dare, and a firmness to support. To a near observer, too, I think a little pride was evident in the short curled lip, as it was now painted, scarcely touching the full ruddy one beneath.

“How beautifully it pouts above that dimpled chin!” said Selina to Charles; “does it not seem to be smiling in blissful ignorance of this world, and all its sorrow and sadness?”

The painter had just caught the mouth’s expression at a moment when you imagined the

lovely being was about to utter some coquetish playfulness; for the well-set eye, large, and of that undefined deep shade of grey, seemed laughing at the merry thought as it came.

“How one could worship that joyous creature,” said Charles; “and what an unstudied carelessness in the dress.”

A frock of white muslin was drawn round the dazzling fairness of the bust, while the dimpling shoulder had rather escaped from its bondage. A broad belt of blue ribbon, half unfastened, hung from her side. A scarf of the same colour, and a small gipsy bonnet were held in one pretty hand; the other rested on a marble slab, upon which had been thrown a profusion of luxuriant flowers.

“How I long,” said Selina, “to watch that rosy cheek changing, as I am sure it was wont to do. It is just that transparent complexion you imagine, varying with every emotion.”

“ Yes ; and I have seen it as white as the marble table on which her flowers are strewed,” said Mrs. Moore.

“ Then she lived to be unhappy,” said Selina ; “ but she must have been happy when that picture was taken.”

“ It was taken from a copy,” replied Mrs. Moore, and her face reddened slightly as she spoke. “ It was done before I knew my lady.”

“ Before she was married ?”

“ Only one year.”

“ What,—the copy, or the original likeness of the lady ?” said Charles.

“ The likeness, the likeness ;” and Mrs. Moore again hurried on.

They quitted the gallery, and passed into a small room. It had evidently been the favoured retreat of some gifted one—woman spoke in every arrangement. The domed ceiling, exquisitely painted, told its classic tale ; nor less the mellowed tints of the storied windows. The fair Daina stood, half veiled, gazing on her own



bright form in waters of trembling light, surrounded by nymphs and shades of living beauty. Many more were there;—but the splendour of the rich pink and silver furniture; the instruments of music and carved boxes of ivory and inlaid woods; the thousand little bijouteries and the superb cabinets filled with all the best authors of modern languages, and lighter works in cases of ebony; and even the view from out the windows passed almost unnoticed; they opened on what had been a flower garden;—weeds and grass, long and withered, now o’erran it. This sloped down to a rippling stream, which trickled through a little rustic glade, where the choicest shrubs were still blooming wildly luxuriant. For a moment Selina looked out of the window.

“What a pity this should run to waste.”

“It was my lord’s commands,” said Mrs. Moore; “that no flowers should ever grow again there, as my lady could not look on them.”

“And why not?”

But Selina was interrupted by Charles.

“ Here, Selina ; this is the picture that had the curtain over it.”

And when she turned to it, everything else was unheeded. It was the only one in the room ; its subject was evidently a family group. In the back ground was the figure of an extreme handsome man in the very prime of manhood ; the eye was of the darkest blue, the jetty lash lending a deeper shade to its somewhat wild and energetic expression ; that expression was now softened into fondness, for he was gazing on the objects of his dearest affections. The brow was broad, open, and fair—fairer from the contrast of the clear bright brown of the cheek and the rich clustering of the raven hair. The contour of head was fully displayed by the folding collar which partially exposed the throat, and gave to the whole figure an attitude and character—a fine model for a Roman senator—but in his home of love ; he was now gazing on a fair wife and blooming family.

“Surely! surely!—it is—yet it cannot be the same.”

Though but a picture, Selina could have wept the change.

“Is this the Countess St. Aubin?”

“She was the wife of that Lord,” replied Mrs. Moore.

“And those sweet children?” asked Selina.

“Lord St. Aubin’s.”

The boy, a fine, dark-eyed little fellow, seated at the lady’s feet, was fondling a small Blenheim. The little girl was leaning on her mother’s knee, gazing pensively up into her face, though scarcely more than an infant.

“How changed, how sad!—Is it not, Charles? It could not have been wrought by time.”

“Time,—no; this was painted when the lady was only five and twenty. Not more than ten years between this and that same lady you admired in the gallery,” said Mrs. Moore.

“Yet of that other picture, what is left but

the fine open brow and outline of Grecian beauty. Can it be the fashion and style of dress?"

For in this, the lady was presented quite in the old English costume, save the hair, which hung in flowing ringlets on either side of the face, and strayed on the *still* dimpled snowy shoulder. The full girlish figure was now rounded into womanhood, which the somewhat exposed mode of attire tended rather to display than conceal. A velvet band, fastened with a brilliant, encircled the swan-like throat of alabaster,—to which was suspended a cross of gold and precious gems. A rich black velvet, ornamented with pearls, and tassels of the same, hung from the long pointed stomacher. The dress, falling off on either side, was richly trimmed with blond, and shewed the robe of white satin beneath. The sleeves came tight below the elbow, and then fell off with full frillings of the same lace, displaying beneath them the rounded arm and rich armlets. But the

chains of pearly whiteness were not as tintless as the lady's cheek. Still the mouth was three, saying, "Do you remember the Hebe girl of fifteen?" Though smiling, it seemed to be more in pity than in joy, to be more a reflection of what had been than what was—a smile that told of coming calm or past brightness. That eye, so large and expressive, was now fixed tenderly on her children, but it was sadly changed—no coquettish archery was there; all was gone. More of love and softness, perhaps, was visible, but it was shadowed with melancholy. It told of subdued feeling,—of a hopeless, a blighted heart.

"It makes me wretched," said Selina; "something cruel must have worked such a change. How I should like to learn the tale of your life, you lovely creature," and she turned her tearful eyes on Mrs. Moore.

"Your mother, lady, could tell you more than I can."

The party now looked round the room;—everything spoke of domestic happiness; but

evidently that domestic link had been severed suddenly, painfully.

On a beautiful little table of mosaic, richly ornamented with gold, were strewed all the materials for work ;—Selina looked at them.

“ Do not touch them, lady,” said Mrs. Moore.

“ Were they the Countess’s ?”

“ I suppose so. His Lordship ordered all to remain as you see.”

Some fair hand had been embroidering a frock for a child ; the needle and work were there as if but placed there yesterday, save that dust and time had stained their freshness. A book, too, turned on its leaves and open, was beside them. It was a volume of Milton. The very seat remained just as it had been left, with its footstool in front. It was a magnificent Grecian lounge of pink satin damask.

“ Yes,” said Mrs. Moore ; “ my Lord’s first command was, that not a hand was to touch that table. It is dusty now, but she will never come to order it otherwise.” There is something

speaking in such objects as these—a voice of the dead to the living.

Selina's eye was rivetted on them, when Mrs. Moore's niece entered, and told them the other lady had fainted. Selina hastened to her mother, and found indeed that she had fainted. It was immediately opposite to the picture of Lady St. Aubin in the gallery.

Some hours elapsed before Mrs. Dorville was sufficiently recovered to return to the inn, though the carriage had been sent for to convey her back. She made no allusions to the cause of her illness, and of course Selina was silent on the subject; but before she quitted St. Aubin, she had some private conversation with Mrs. Moore.

Mrs. Dorville's mind seemed composed, but old Mrs. Moore was apparently much more flurried and agitated; but yet it was as if the feeling arose from pleasure rather than pain; and with many blessings from the old lady, they bid adieu to St. Aubin Hall and its pictures;

but not to their memory. That pale, pensive face was still with Selina,—so angelic, so subdued. And then that noble, proud man, pouring a very world of fondness on the group; the father and the husband imaged so dotingly in that expressive eye; the bland benevolence of that half smile; the stamp of regality on that high brow, embodying all of pleasing, and all of distinguishing greatness, both of mind and heart.

“He is a person who could never have thought a lowering thing; never have felt an evil one,” said Selina to Davenant, as they were sitting the next morning talking over the pictures; “and do you know, Charles, mamma asked me if I was disappointed in the picture of that lovely woman. No, indeed, I told her; she was a very dream to me. ‘Yes,’ mamma replied; ‘so has she been to me many a year back; but in weeping—in—but, *no matter*—God’s will must be done. Her misfortunes were worked by one who ever darkly stepped in with over-



shadowing vengeance between her and brightness.'” Selina paused a moment, and then added, “ But what can it all mean? She is certainly dead ; do you not think so, Charles? But hark ! what is that noise ?—mamma has fallen. Did you not hear her scream ?” and Selina rushed out of the room and was up stairs in an instant. Mrs. Dorville had fallen from her seat, and a letter was laying beside her. She could not speak for some time. At last she recovered, and informed Selina that the sudden intelligence which that letter contained must take her to Clifton without an hour’s delay. Its contents were of the most painful nature ; but she trusted her father would meet them there, as he was now arrived at P ——.

We will now leave Selina, her mother, and Davenant, to pursue their journey to Clifton, and look over the events of many years, till their history shall bring us back to the already related period of the tale.

Perhaps the best opening to this sad narra-

tive will be a letter which displays the earliest infancy of that joyous one of whom it tells, and from whence her first impressions drew their birth—those first impressions which, with us all, neither time nor tide can efface. On an unspotted surface are they graven, yet after ones, darker and deeper, can never erase them.

This letter had been penned some years prior to the time of the opening of this tale, but long after most circumstances related in it had occurred. It was as follows :—

“ DEAREST ELLEN,

“ I shall be with thee quickly, best beloved ; returned once more to my native England. I spend but a few hours at this once happy home. What a tide of recollections does it bring back—to be again under that roof, in that very room in which I have so often beheld my angel sister. Well do I recall the companions of those glad hours while she was yet a lisping child. But where is now their place ? They

are before me as in days gone by—the innocent group ! It was in the nursery I loved to look upon them when assembled to offer up their little prayers. A doting fond mother, then young and interesting, formed the striking character in the picture. Two smiling cherubs just verging into boyhood knelt on either side as she sat in an old carved high-back chair, dressed in such neat, matronly, quiet attire, so in keeping with all she looked and all she thought. One infant girl lay half reclining in her lap—you best know who that was, dearest—while the blooming sunny face of my dear naughty little sister was seen between those of her boys, Clarence even then looking on her with his soft radiant countenance as if he loved her best of any.

“ I now in memory hear the tender voice of childhood breathing forth its evening prayer. I see the small clasped hands raised to Heaven, the very flush yet on the cheek from the last delayed romps. The scattered playthings and

books—all—all are before me. Why does the world, why does time, brush all this bloom and freshness from the forms and souls of young life? How often, when looking upon this sort of budding infancy, have I thought—why do you not remain thus for ever? And while listening to the lisping prayer, I have almost imagined an angel spirit pouring forth its incense. It seemed a prayer unmixed, as all other earthly prayers should be, with earthly feelings, selfish views, and worldly hopes. It was as morning freshness. But to return to the last evening I ever spent thus.

“ The last of many a laughing, playful kiss had been given, the murmur of joyous voices was hushed, and the parent of those cherub boys was beside me in the study of her husband. The purport of my last visit was, on that fatal night, as you know, to leave my sister, an orphan girl, to the care of Ellen Stewart, as my destiny was about to take me to India. With delight she received the charge.

With full undoubting confidence of happiness  
I left her to such a guardian.

“ Little does the mind dive into the secret sources from whence the great mischiefs arise, which, like the many concealed workings of the bodily frame, undermine the constitution of human peace. All lies hidden, till it is too late to find a remedy in the discovery. The disease has touched vitality, and we are become its victim ere we are conscious of its existence. Few or none would have looked upon this my plan for my sister’s happiness, and have foreseen anything but good arising from it. Yet was the seal of destiny now stamping its impress of care and affliction on the story of my sister’s life. When I look back to the character of her to whose care I intrusted her—how fitted for such a task!—when I reflect how steadily she bore her course amid storms and troubled seas, how did I admire and respect her! Yet, to an every-day observer, Ellen Stewart was nothing out of the common,—nothing to give

an idea of such strength of mind, such undeviating rectitude, as was hers. No high tone of sentiment, no apparent decision, no powerful depth of thought ; but there was a meekness of temper, an unslumbering spirit of purity, which rendered her a character almost perfect in every action. But what avails it now ! You knew her even better than I did. Would that Agnes had never quitted Ellen's humble roof!—would that no proud offers had been laid at her feet ! Let me, let me not think of what *might* have been, lest, when I look at what *is*, it drive me mad.

“ Farewell ! best beloved !

“ Yours, ever,

“ HENRY DORVILLE.”

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Is it that I love to cherish the remembrance of that life I am about to trace, and give it, as it were, existence again in words ? No—it is that, though the world is still shadowed to me,

one faint hope glimmer in the distance—that those loved eyes which shall weep over the sorrows and errors of her they must condemn may still breathe a prayer for her pardon ; may still, perhaps, offer a palliation for feelings which, though existing, were never wilfully encouraged or willingly indulged. Though I myself will not say they sprung from ignorance, yet I will say they first originated in innocence. It was not the encouraging, but the doubting their stability that rendered their growth so undermining to every hope of happiness,—the happiness, not alone of self, but of all that bore affinity to self.

But while I ask the prayers and palliations of those dear ones, yet may a deeper and more beneficial result spring up in their young minds. Let not the proudest, the purest, rest in confidence, while one fibre, however fine, however delicate, remains, to militate against those affections which ought to be wholly, solely given, where they have once been pledged.

And let that pledge never, never be given but under the one unpolluted impression, sincere undivided devotedness.

The fatal error of too many in early life is, acting under the momentary instigation of doubt or hasty conclusion, accepting that which is alone the result of wounded feelings as the offspring of facts; and thus decision is made long ere feeling is cooled sufficiently to allow judgment to examine, and then we wander on, perhaps wilfully blind that all is misty around us—and not till it is too late do we perceive that in that very shade and cloud is the blight which is to destroy all it falls on.

Sentiment, like philosophy, is a dangerous refiner; though the evil in one case originates from the knowledge of truth, in the other, from questioning it. But the result of such refinement is equally dangerous, for the heart that once admits feelings it would vainly define under denominations of its own creation will at length discover they must all end in conviction,



as fatal as the philosophy which begins by doubting truth, and terminates in infidelity.

There is something indescribably dear in our first home, where we learn the thousand harmless and treasured secrets attached to that first dear abode, which never leave us, however happy, however realized, our fondest hopes in the after one of life. How often do we find ourselves referring to that home as to a treasure lost, never to be possessed again on earth. This is a something which, perhaps, partakes of that immortal and universal feeling which lives instinctively alike in the breast of Christian and heathen—the looking to an abiding home, even beyond this earthly tabernacle.

However cultivated or uncultivated, still Nature wakes the whisperings within us of that blessed eternal home—a home whose colouring and hues borrows its stamp and character from the hand that executes, rather than from what that everlasting one shall be.

Doubtless, even the Christian mind has a

dreamy picturing of that future world, not wholly divested of earthly affections and earthly associations, affections and associations which ever go back to that first home of infancy and innocence,—there, where earliest knowledge is first imbibed ; where the heart is awakened into existence ; where life, day after day, unfolds, brightly, sweetly as some rosebud which gradually opens each tender leaf, and seems to hail every ray of Heaven's glorious light as it expands in the sunshine of summer.

Shall I bear on, and still hold this emblem, and tell, when scarce full blown, how each leaf purples, withers, and is scattered to expire ? No ; rather let me go back and tell of those who constituted this *my* Eden home.

If it be necessary to have kindred ties, to know their strength, I could never have joyed in them in early life. One recollection I had of a being good and kind ; it was but a recollection, and even the word brother conveyed something to my mind scarcely understood. But if, when a

child loves a parent with devotion, the obedience which the most exalted veneration can excite, which the most tender gratitude can awaken, be evinced—if to feel their wishes your commands, their pleasure your happiness,—if to cling to them with every fibre of your heart as the clustering tendrils of a plant around the trunk which nourishes its existence, be the child's love of a parent, mine must have been that for Mrs. Stewart.

I said I knew a brother's name but in recollection; but did ever fondest sister treasure a brother's or sister's love as I did that of Edward and Ellen Stewart's. Was not their home my home? their joy, their sorrow, my joy, my sorrow?

And must I not write of another's fondness? Yes; I will disguise nothing. I will tell how from very infancy Clarence Stewart shared every childish sport, every young instruction; how his manly spirit entered into every girlish folly and fancy, and humoured every idle whim.

Wrong or right, Clarence Stewart was ever the champion of Agnes Dorville.

If in disgrace, Clarence would steal to her side, and bring smiles with him. Was anything to be selected, Clarence was the first to bring the choicest to Agnes. A difficult task to be got over, Clarence was with Agnes, and its difficulty was conquered or forgotten. In the dance, in the game, Clarence was ever her partner. For her he would climb every tree to bring her its fruits; lead her pony, or walk by her side through the wild woods, or along the meadows, and pluck every sweet flower for her nosegay.

Then in her garden, not a weed was there. When of a summer's eve we would assemble together in a favourite bower, or sit on the grassy slope of the cottage, even then would Clarence shew that none were so dear as Agnes Dorville, for he was by her side. Her taste alone decided his song, and no hand but his must touch the guitar while Agnes' voice was

heard. Did boyish temper ever rise, Agnes had but to smile, and all was calm again. Did his pencil trace a form, Agnes seemed to breathe in it. Was a book to be read, Agnes must approve, or it could possess no charm.

But how shall I tell of all this wild, fond devotion? It will be to tell of every moment from infancy to girlhood—from the moment we met till we parted. But what name, what definition, had it in my mind; it was regarded by all as the mere union of kindred—as a brother's love, as a sister's fondness.

Why was the curtain dropped to shew at once the fiction of that which, while looking on, I dreamed to be a dear reality! Is it not with a painful consciousness that we turn from mere theatrical delusion, and with excited and subdued feelings, walk back and mingle with the world's heartless ways? What, then, must be our sufferings when we find it is no mere tale we have been acting—that we must act it no longer—must sever from all and every link

which has made the soul glad—must be a creature of another world—all that *has* been must never be again. Yet this change speaks not in its full force when first opened upon us, but like those poisons which, by slowly destroying vitality, render every breath of life a pang, gradually tortures and consumes us.

Think not that all this reasoning arose in my young mind—that these were the thoughts of the passing moments;—no; they had not yet risen to damp my buoyant spirits;—no; it was not till I had mingled with what is called the world that I discovered how little I had gained, and how much I had lost.

The period was, alas! now approaching that was about to shew me all this. A connexion of my father's, a gay, fashionable widow, had lately married her own two daughters to her full satisfaction. Whether it was having so well succeeded in this grand ambition of her heart that she wished for another object to exercise her powers on, I know not; or whether she thought

it necessary to have some excuse for still visiting the haunts of pleasure and festivity, and wished to make me her tool, I am equally at a loss to guess; but for fourteen years I had remained even in ignorance of Mrs. Elton or her relationship, when suddenly we received a letter from her addressed to Mrs. Stewart.

Mrs. Stewart had not only heard of, but had known her slightly in her early days; but still she was somewhat surprised at the purport of her letter.

Some months previous to the receipt of Mrs. Elton's letter, some distant connexions, by accident, visiting the town of W——, near which we resided, paid me a visit. Mrs. Stewart begged them to honour her with their company for some short period, which they did. I cannot say, I either understood or admired them.

They talked of London, of balls, of titles, and of dress. For me they professed wonderful approval, raved of what they called my superior

beauty, and expressed astonishment at my accomplishments and manners. Where in W—— could I have learnt such skill in music—my voice, too, so modulated ! my sketches, so finished !

“Clarance and myself,” replied the gentle Mrs. Stewart, “have been Agnes’ sole instructors.”

“What ! the son now at home ?” asked Miss Dorville.

“No,” replied Ellen ; “one twice as handsome as Edward ; but he is at Oxford.”

“Mr. Stewart is quite handsome enough,” replied Mrs. Dorville.

“Perhaps you will see Clarance ; he returns to-day or to-morrow,” said Ellen.

Mrs. Dorville answered, with a sneer which I then little understood, but could not but perceive—

“Too handsome for a young lady’s instructor. We must have Agnes in London. She looks just cut out for a countess.”



“Will that insure her happiness,” said Mrs. Stewart; “if it will, may you be one, my pretty Agnes,” and Mrs. Stewart threw back my curls and kissed my brow.

“No—if I do not live with you all, I am sure it will not.”

At this moment we heard busy and glad voices, and a quick step. I leaped from the stool on which I was seated at Mrs. Stewart’s feet. I felt my face glow with joy, as I clapped my hands, and ran to the stairs.

“’Tis Clarence’s step, Ellen, Ellen”—and I was down stairs, happy above all that I was the one to give and receive the first welcome. Even now I can recall the look of contempt and anger on Mrs. Dorville’s countenance, as I looked up the stairs, and saw the party all descending.

Never had Clarence appeared so handsome, or to greater advantage, as with friendly greeting he advanced towards Mrs. and Miss Dorville on hearing their names. They certainly did look as if *they* also thought him a great deal

handsomer than Edward ; still, in the expression of Mrs. Dorville's face there was something I could not bear to look upon.

I saw her eye upon me in particular, as I stood delighted by Clarence's side, with Ellen asking him a thousand questions, and telling him as many nothings, to which, however, he was listening with joyous and happy smiles. One remark he made, and then it was I again saw Mrs. Dorville's evil eye upon us.

"Why, Agnes, dear, I believe you mean to outgrow me. Is she not nearly as tall as I am, Ellen?"

"No, Clarence, not as tall as you," I replied ; "you must be a great deal taller than me. I should wish you to be tall."

I know not if it was Mrs. Dorville's evil glance that made me blush, as soon as I had said this, but I felt my cheeks crimsoned, and I saw, too, that Clarence perceived it—but Mrs. Dorville and her daughter had passed on to the porch.

We remained in the hall—I was near an open window, and hearing the name of Clarence, I listened, as I heard Miss Dorville say —

“Mamma, did you ever see any one half so elegant—so perfectly handsome?”

“So much the worse.”

“So much the worse!—what can she mean?” and I really, for the first time in my life, felt what it was to dislike a fellow-creature. Little did I know what a train of thought had been awakened in Mrs. Dorville’s mind, and had given rise to this observation, or that I was in any way connected with it, and still less that from the simple circumstances of this day my future life was to take its shade.

In a few days after these apparently trifling events, Mrs. Dorville took her leave. To me she was all affection—to Mrs. Stewart and her family, proud and cold.

Anna Dorville evinced great regret at her departure. We laughed, and told Clarence it was all for him. Indeed, could we have looked

into futurity, we might have seen it was indeed *all for him*. But we soon returned to our own dear ways, as we called them, and as Clarence was now to be at home for the whole long vacation, Ellen and I were perfect in our happiness.

Mrs. Stewart, left very young a widow, had taken a small cottage in the neighbourhood of Malvern, and lived in the most secluded retirement. Her children and myself, her sole and only thought—save the clergyman of the parish, and a few humbler neighbours. I had never, till now, been in the society of strangers, nor had the specimen I had seen in Mrs. Dorville in the least excited my wishes to increase my knowledge of the world beyond the limits of Copsewood cottage.

Such blissful ignorance was not to be my lot—and the day came in which the tide of my life was to take its ebb—destiny had opened her book, and misery and suffering claimed me as her own.

Mrs. Dorville, on returning to London, went immediately on a visit to her sister, Mrs. Elton, and, while loud in my praises, was not backward in giving her own colouring to Mrs. Stewart, and what she denominated her speculations. She advised Mrs. Elton, as my brother's nearest connexion, to do something to overthrow them; as she said, with the beauty and fortune I had claim to, I should not be allowed to humble my family by a low connexion, when I might exalt it by a lofty one, if properly introduced.

Mrs. Elton, a proud, worldly, and artful woman, instantly caught at the seeming advantage and wrote to my brother, but knowing his devotion to Mrs. Stewart, concealed the unkind comments of Mrs. Dorville; she merely stated the advantages which would arise to me from her introduction to society, as Mrs. Stewart's habits were so retired that I was kept in perfect seclusion, and that she, Mrs. Elton, was sure Mrs. Stewart, from her own

good judgment, would admit the necessity and benefit of sparing me for a brief time. My brother's answer was favourable to her wishes, provided they met Mrs. Stewart's consent; and on the receipt of this communication, Mrs. Elton wrote immediately to Mrs. Stewart.

Her letter was guarded; evidently written by one who judged others by the standard of her own character. But Mrs. Stewart weighed only my advantage; her own feelings were never allowed to have the slightest influence; and with pain she acknowledged that the sacrifice must be made, as it was for my benefit; and so far from murmuring, endeavoured to make me look upon it with the same resignation.

“ If, dearest Agnes, you continue to love our humble happy home, after you have tried Mrs. Elton's, so opposite in splendour and amusement, we shall rejoice to have you amongst us again. It is a dangerous and gay vortex, Agnes, you are about to enter on, and with attractions

which render it still more so ; but I know my Agnes for a sweet girl."

The tears were in the mild eyes of dear Mrs. Stewart, and she could not restrain them when she remembered what would be the feelings of her children.

" The poor boys and Ellen !——" she could say no more, but pressing me for a moment fondly to her heart, she hastily left the room.

I sat down, and never knew what sorrow was till now. I will write to my brother, beseeching him not to leave this dear, dear spot. In an instant I seemed to love every object I looked upon. What ! shall I be separated from the home of my childhood—from Ellen, Edward, and Clarence ? and dwelling on that last name, I sat still holding Mrs. Elton's letter in my hands. It ran thus :

" DEAR MADAM,

" Fearing till now Agnes had been too young to be taken, even for a temporary period, from

such a guardian as Mrs. Stewart, I had delayed writing to Mr. Dorville to request he would allow me to have the happiness of introducing her ; but even this should not have been presumed upon, had I not been perfectly aware of your habits of life, and that they opened little opportunity to Agnes of seeing the world, which I have no doubt you agree with Mr. Dorville and myself in deeming advisable she should do.

“ Mrs. Dorville, my sister, who has recently had the pleasure of seeing Agnes, tells me she is beautiful, elegant, and accomplished — amiable we cannot doubt. Mrs. Stewart has been her preceptress.

“ If her removal meets your approval, which Mr. Dorville seems every way anxious it should do, we will finally arrange that in another week. I shall have the happiness of sending my carriage and servants for her.

“ I understand she has some young companions. I trust they will not grieve too keenly for



the loss and separation they must naturally sustain.

“ With a thousand affectionate kindnesses to my sweet cousin, and every respect for yourself and family,

“ I remain, dear madam,

“ Your obliged,

“ ANNA ELTON.”

I was young in years and wisdom ; but still in this letter, even to my inexperience, something of heart was wanting ; nothing of the sincere, open, simple Mrs. Stewart. I knew little of deception or art ; but this letter, for the first time, seemed to give me an idea of what worldly deception was. On one word my eye did rest again and again, and of it I thought what trifles serve to create and awaken character, and open to our knowledge the recesses of the human heart, revealing hidden sympathies and undiscovered powers.

If, from childhood, we could dive into the depths of our own minds, and watch the first breathings of all their various and new developments, we should behold the origin of their earliest existence springing from impressions apparently as insignificant as the smallest atoms, which, condensed and united, form the great mass of mighty creation.

But to return. My eye, I said, rested on one word,—it was that of “beautiful;” and what was the question it suggested; it was, whether Clarence Stewart thought me so.

Perhaps this was the first time I had ever paused to reflect upon what he thought of me. Ever finding myself the first object of his attention and regard, I had been too happy, too blessed, to question from whence sprung that attention and regard, and this was the first moment my heart had ever throbbed with a doubt of what extent the feelings were which he bore towards me. Not that now I analyzed them; I only felt that I wished Clarence thought

me beautiful. The value put upon his estimate of me appeared ten thousand times more valuable than all the world had to offer—the joys of my now humble home more than all its splendours—the dear approval of its companions to be prized above all its flattery.

But a sickening presentiment now whispered, that from it and them I was about to be severed. It was the most painful moment I had ever experienced. I sobbed bitterly—I threw my face on my closed hands, and laid them on the table. I heard the light, buoyant step of Clarence close to me, but I could not raise up my head and look into his smiling eyes as I was wont to do whenever he approached.

I felt my cheek warm, and my pulse beat quick. It was the first conscious throb of love, and never to the same measure for another has it beat. In a moment he was in the chair beside me—his arm was round me.

“ Agnes !”

Years are gone and passed, yet the tone of that voice can never be forgotten.

I raised my head ; we neither of us spoke, but from that period we felt we were all the world to each other. Amidst revelry and song, splendour and beauty, in sorrow and in trial, in solitude and meditation, has that moment come before me, absorbing all feeling but the recollection of itself.

We asked not each other if we loved ; we felt that that would break a spell which had nothing on earth to compare to its charm.

It was that love which one alone can excite—it dwells in the soul through life,—it is that spirit of love which shall gladden even Heaven's paradise—for one only can it be felt. Few have power to infuse it—few have capability to know it.

The gladness of those joyous moments now do I recall to the minutest point. The expression, attitude, the trembling touch of his hand as we sat together ; and then that voice of music as he again pronounced my name—its very tone breathed adoration ! That face so beautiful, so softened, yet so impassioned !

Could I give you but an image of Clarence Stewart at this period, you would pardon my girlish devotion as I now was beside him. So faultless, so wholly divested of all those imperfections of person, of manner, of disposition, which we find so often jarring, even on the most blind affection; but you contemplated the character of Clarence, and what trait startled or made you doubt? you associated daily, hourly, with Clarence, and were you not drawn still closer to him by that quick, unselfish manner? the eye rested on that countenance, and read no fault in it; while the heart, to which it spoke of love, found all its fondest hopes reflected there. Eyes of that hue which, while they gazed on you, borrowed a richer tint from the depths of impassioned feeling, yet so changing that you might find no colour to give their shade a name.

Clarence at this time was scarcely twenty, and though nothing of unmanliness was on the brow, yet, as I now recal that face, it was

one more of saintly perfection than of earthly character. The rich clustering hair; the complexion, that flushed and paled with every emotion; then the suffusion of his smile, not the gladdening of the mere mouth—it was a perfect illumination of every feature. A tone, a word, a note of exquisite music, may give a joyous thrill,—his smile could give more than all this; but it must have been felt, and then it would have been known to be how much more!

And am I the Agnes who sat by Clarence Stewart, and thus trembled beneath the emotions of that hour? Yet, when I look at what I am, what I then was, I doubt my own identity, question the possibility of previous existence, and its connexion with reality. But let me hasten on to tell how I lived,—not to forget all, but to fly from its too intoxicating recollection. I was unfaithful to myself, but never to Clarence Stewart.

Mrs. Stewart, in answering Mrs. Elton's

letter, requested a reprieve of one month ; at the end of which period, she promised to accompany me herself to London.

What a month of mingled feeling was this ! The joy of Clarence and myself, while together, seemed untouched. But he said, the moment I was out of his sight he should feel as if our separation had already taken place, and he was miserable. It were as if he had never loved me till now, so intense was the adoration of his looks and words ;—his eye or his step never turned from me. He drew like an artist, and now all his powers were directed to trace that resemblance which lived in his heart,—to have it ever present to his view.

I, too, must carry the images of all these dear ones of my fondest regards away with me. Clarence must execute the group. The scene was chosen. It was the favourite summer-house. Ellen on a rustic bench at its entrance, her guitar suspended from her pretty shoulder with a ribbon bright as her own laugh-



ing eyes. Edward, then a fine manly fellow, with a countenance full of sincerity and truth, stood in the background leaning on his gun. Mrs. Stewart, with her soft benevolent looks, was placed at the table. She held a book in her hand ; but her regards, full of affection, were bent on myself as I reclined at her feet. Clarence's favourite Blenheim was in my lap, and though I fondled the faithful creature, it appeared only to watch its master sketching the group. I remember well,—I seized the pencil from his hand as he traced himself.

“ Clarence, you are not vain enough ; I must finish this figure, shall I not ? ”

The beaming look that returned answer to my request ! it surely gave inspiration to my pencil, for canvass never shewed a form of more perfection. Even though the artist, I stood enraptured, delighted at my own powers. Yet all declared I had not flattered, as they looked from it to Clarence, while he stood fixedly gazing at her whose hand had traced it.



The feelings that were beating at these moments at the heart of Clarence Stewart will ever irradiate even the plainest with beauties all their own. The sketch was finished too soon, and so were my joyous days—such unalloyed ones have never since been possessed by me.

I left the dear sweet home of my childhood ; my little bark was driven from the smooth sunny waters on which it had sported in peaceful sail for fifteen halcyon summers ; the stormy ocean of the world was before me, and with sad sorrowing I went forth to battle with its shifting tides and surgy waves. Why could I not have moored it in that placid harbour for ever, and have been blessed with a lot which queens might envy — the love of those we love ?

END OF VOL. I.



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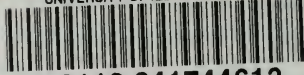








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